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NATURE AND GRACE.

L. B. SEELEY AND SONS,
WESTON GREEN, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.

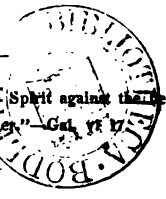
J. H. 1827.

NATURE AND GRACE;

OR,

A DELINEATION OF THE VARIOUS DISPOSITIONS OF THE NATURAL MAN, CONTRASTED WITH THE OPPOSITE CHARACTER OF THE RENEWED MIND.

BY Mrs. STEVENS.



"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other." Gal. v. 17.

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331.

NATURE AND GRACE.

Advertisement.

THE Pages here offered to the Public contain the Substance of a Course of Subjects, considered in a catechetical school for young persons and adults, assembled for the purpose of investigating Divine Truth.

The Author has been requested by some Friends, present at the time, to give them to the press—in the hope that the Eternal Spirit may acknowledge the offering to those who are pursuing the life of faith.

June 26th, 1827.

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NATURE AND GRACE.

IDOLATRY.

In the course of subjects, upon which we are entering, it appears most suitable, to lead our minds, in the first place, to the examination of the sin of Idolatry. It is that awful crime of nature which is the foundation of innumerable other corruptions, both in principle and in practice; and a right understanding, of its true character and extent, may serve to awaken vigilance, and quicken to godly sorrow, for the wretchedness of a transgressing nature. With hearts alive to the importance of the discussion, both as it respects the interests of God, in the world and in our own souls, let us prosecute our inquiry, and ask the divine Teacher, the Holy Ghost, mercifully to become our guide, and to seal instruction upon the mind.

Idolatry is the act of ascribing to any person, or thing, those properties which are peculiar to God; or it is the surrender of the affections, desires, and thoughts, to the creature, more than to the Creator. The possibility of such a perversion of our powers should justly be considered a subject of awe and wonder: but it is accounted for, in the wretched apostacy of nature in the first man. Originally, the creature possessed a mind and heart, in perfect accordance with all that a righteous and glorious God could demand. As he was appointed to be a dependant debtor for every blessing, so he was prepared to feel an abounding gratitude for all that was bestowed: and, with a fresh spring of love and adoration ever rising in his breast, he would feel it his joy, and his privilege, to know none like his God, and to admit no rival to Him in his soul. Surrounded as he was by pledges of the bounty of his Maker, he was perpetually reminded of the goodness of Him, from whom his enjoyments were derived; and having within him a holy principle, which could assimilate with the eternal mind, it would be his richest refreshment to hold communion with his known and ever present God. Transgression darkened all these bright delights, and cast over the fallen sinner a midnight shade. Having turned away from the only source of knowledge and holiness, he became ignorant, carnal, and gross; and although retaining an instinctive impression of

the existence of a divine Being, he ceased to have any natural power of realizing Him who is invisible, or of conceiving aright of the excellency and perfection of the divine attributes. A sense of the necessity of paying homage to God, and a consciousness of human responsibility still remained: this was sufficient to excite some solicitude, and to move to some attempts at worship; but to adore and serve an unseen, a pure, an infinite Being, became difficult, yea impossible, and ceasing to have any power of just judgment, or any life of spiritual affections, he soon formed for himself gods most suitable to his conceptions, and most flattering to his vain imaginations. The extent to which this senseless and daring wickedness proceeded, is strongly and awfully expressed by the apostle, in Rom. i. 20—23. The evil evidently advanced in the earth progressively; and the *developement* of human apostacy gathered increasingly monstrous and visible features. At first, the heavenly bodies seem to have been the idols of men, and the sun and the moon were considered in the light of the great benefactors of men, and as the proper objects of worship. Ignorant as the mind of man had become, we are disposed to feel less surprise that an apostate nature should select *these* for its gods: instrumentally they are blessings to the universal world, without which it could not exist: and the visible effects attendant upon the orbs of day, and of night, were calculated to

arrest the attention of man, and to afford him what he might in his ignorance consider suitable objects on which to rest his faith. We next trace the progress of idolatry in the deifying of departed benefactors, kings, heroes, defenders, &c. &c. These were supposed to live in the state of separate spirits, as guardians of the land or region to which they had consecrated their talents, during their existence in this world, and that to them was due the tribute of adoration and honour, both for past services and for present protection. In process of time, it was imagined, that as there is an *evil* being, as well as one who is good, it would prove advantageous to be upon terms of peace with him, lest he should use his power to torment and afflict; and that he might be appeased, or propitiated, were sacrifices offered to him. Accordingly *Satan* became an object of worship, and the most bloody deeds were perpetrated, human sacrifices being constantly presented to him, in the hope that these might satisfy and induce him to spare the survivors: and at length, so utterly gross and carnal did man become, that the animal and vegetable and the whole natural world seemed ransacked by his inventive and apostate mind, in order to provide him with an increased multiplicity of gods. Animals, plants, rivers, &c. were avowedly bowed down to as the supreme object of man's adoration; and images, blocks of wood and of stone barbarously fashioned,

and the representations of the most hideous monsters, were raised up for national veneration, and made the altar before which children were given as bleeding victims, and the most exquisite tortures were inflicted by the infatuated worshippers on their own bodies. Thus the heathen world exhibited, and does still exhibit, the most frightful explanation of what is intended by *Idolatry*.

But are we to exhaust our reproach of fallen nature upon the *heathen* lands? Alas, do we not find the same provocation in countries, and under circumstances, where we might least expect to discover this gross insult upon the divine majesty? To Israel as a nation, God was pleased to dispense a gracious revelation, through which He imparted that knowledge of the true God which was lost to nature; and having separated Abraham from his idols, and made known to him the glory of the divine name, He proceeded to provide for his descendants standing memorials of the same truth, and to choose them for His own people, that they might worship and serve *Him alone*. Along with the revelation of his own glory, He was pleased also to proclaim perpetual precept, exhortation, and denunciation, in order to keep Israel from idols, showing them the accursed nature, and consequences of such abominations. All this, however, was not sufficient to deter the nation from the trespass; and their history testifies how

constantly they went after their strange gods, walked in the way of the heathen, and multiplied and invented new objects of worship. We cannot have a more awful evidence of this than in the history of the golden calf made by Aaron, and honoured by Israel, even at the foot of that burning mount, from whence they had heard a few days before, the terrible voice of the Almighty proclaiming, "Ye shall not make to yourselves any graven image." No judgments, no threatenings, no sufferings, prevailed to eradicate this propensity, until having finished the measure of this provocation, they were as a punishment for their sin delivered to the sword and captivity. Ex. xxxii. 1—8. 2 Kings xvii. 7—12.

We read the record of the Jewish folly, and consequent desolation, and perhaps we are disposed to conclude, surely such testimonies will at any rate preserve succeeding generations from treading the same way of sin; and especially where *Christian* light abounds, we may look for final and complete deliverance from *such* an offence. Will this conclusion be justified by facts? Let us look for the reply to this question to the lands professing Christianity. Are there no images, no deified saints, no tributes offered to departed spirits? Alas, Israel is *exceeded;* yea many *heathen* lands are exceeded, by men who profess the religion of Jesus, and call themselves Christians; and in this our day,

we look on the exhibition of an idolatrous church, where saints, sacraments, relics, garments, images, &c. &c. receive the prayer, the prostration, the offering of money, gifts, &c. and the confidence and trust of deceived and deceiving men; proving to us that men are not purged from this gross apostacy from God and spiritual worship, notwithstanding the increased advantage of the clear light of the gospel, and that the prophetic warning is awfully verified. 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. Rev. xvii.

The obstinacy of this native propensity cannot be more affectingly placed before us than in the example of *believers*, who, although taught the knowledge of the true God, and *loving* Him also, have been found capable of trespass in this sin. In *Jacob's* habitation there were found *household gods*, see Gen. xxxv. 2, 3; and in *Solomon's* heart a treacherous corruption was lurking, that led him into acts of provocation, alarming and horrible in their extent; see 1 Kings xi. 4. Alas! can we need stronger evidence that Idolatry is a sin of *nature?* Shall we not, from such a tide of practical demonstration, be persuaded to believe that man is gone away far from God, and that he is become a desperate and ignorant alien from the only true object of worship and honour?

We are not, however, to conclude, that whilst we admit the undeniable evidence, in application to those who are thus grossly guilty, we ourselves may plead innocent, if we have not

bent the knee to some stock or stone. Education, and the exercise of a reasonable mind, may have prevailed to keep us from this act, yet we may be idolaters in the most fearful sense, and in God's sight may stand chargeable with having ascribed to the creature powers or properties possessed only by the Creator; or with having surrendered to the creature affections and desires that are the right of the Lord Jehovah alone. The prophet Ezekiel was taught, by a very expressive vision, to testify against Israel for an idolatry practised in the chambers of man's imagery; see Ez. viii. 8—12. And the Scriptures address us in a form which points to the hidden and secret feelings, and springs of action, showing that whosoever robbeth God of his just tribute, and gives it to another, setting up in the heart a rival to the divine claim, becomes an idolater in so doing, and will be judged accordingly; see Col. iii. 5. This consideration opens to us a large field of inquiry into the condition of every man's soul, as it respects this spiritual kind of idolatry.

In how many particulars, may we discover the justice of a charge brought against man on this ground! Were it to be confined to the one point, of idolatry, of *self*, assuredly we must acknowledge that all are guilty. There is an inordinate love of this idol in every breast; and although it may differ in its particular mode of expression, we shall perceive that sacrifices are

continually demanded and made, in some form, by which self-gratification and complacency may be obtained. Some persons are bent upon obtaining the exaltation of their *own will;* they are determined upon the fulfilment of such devices, designs, and projects, as are to them necessary for the establishment of their happiness or their credit in the world. Others are intent upon reigning in the popular opinion, and of having the public tribute laid prostrate before their name. Others will demand, that to their beauty, wit, and personal attractions, the wondering eye or the surrendered heart shall be made captive. And many there are, who, without the temptation inordinately to *admire* the mortal body, will give up their whole attention to the *care* of it, and exhaust their own time, solicitude, and property, and expect the same unwearied attention from others, in nothing more than excessive anxiety for health, ease, or life. In these cases, it is evident that self is an idol, and that all things are made to bow down to the consideration of its elevation and supreme demands.

In dispositions less engrossed by personal attention, the same native propensity is discovered, by turning the current of feeling upon creatures; children, friends, lovers, and associates, are all made so many gods; they engross the warmest emotions of the heart; to them every thought and imagination incessantly turn;

every undertaking or pursuit has interest in it only in proportion as it is connected with the beloved object. Every feeling and temper is exposed to excitement and disorder through the channel of their smiles, or frowns, or presence, or absence, or life, or death; and when disaster arises, or separation occurs, or death is commissioned to sever the human tie, the whole soul is thrown into wild disorder, and the language of the heart is, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I left!" That this is no exaggerated charge is manifest from the effects which follow this idolatry. In comparison with the indulgence of the favourite object, the laws of God are in such instances utterly contemptible; nothing prohibitory is listened to, no injunction is regarded, the *child* must be gratified at whatever expense, and divine commands be trampled under foot, if they stand in the way of this gratification; the *friend* must receive the most unlimited demonstration of supreme regard, whatever may be the sacrifice; and, very frequently, character, life, and even the hope of eternity, are made subservient to this domineering affection, and are voluntarily offered as a tribute to the idol.

In other instances, we behold the unquestionable existence of Idolatry, in an inordinate love of money, which the miser hoards up with anxious solicitude, to amass and to keep the treasure as the treasure of *his heart:* the gold

and the silver are his gods, and to these he will sacrifice every personal comfort, every domestic enjoyment, and every claim of charity: he is satisfied, if he can secure his possessions, and feast his eye or his imagination upon the increasing amount of his wealth; nor does he know a passion or desire equal to that which reigns in his breast towards this his god, and in comparison of which all other interests are insipid or despised.

There are also inordinate lovers of money, from the consideration of the advantages, pleasures, or gratifications, which it may procure: but in these instances it is not the *reigning* god; *pleasure*, and sensuality, and dissipation, are the prevalent passions; and here again the apostate nature is betrayed, and men, chargeable with being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, are brought in guilty as idolaters.

It is also possible, even for such as profess religious zeal and devotion, to be found corrupted in this sin, which works with subtlety, and mixes in the very means by which simplicity of faith should be cherished. The favourite minister, the estimated ordinances, the society of saints, may all become so many subjects upon which idolatrous nature may fasten its inordinate affection; and instead of looking through the instrument, or institution, to the Divine Author of all spiritual blessings, the *channel* becomes the centre of expectation and delight, and the *in-*

strument absorbs the attention, and receives the tribute of glory, due only to God.

Thus we are taught, not only to know that there is such an evil as Idolatry, but that it comprehends more than the act of prostration offered before some image or idol of human invention; that the region of man's heart is found to be the seat of this apostate propensity; and that it will manifest itself even in the exercise of affections that, if properly regulated, would be amongst the chief excellencies of man. In examination of our own particular history and experience, we shall be convinced that God has already witnessed an awful degree of the evil in us. In some of the forms enumerated, we must detect our own likeness; for there never was a sinner whose heart naturally and spontaneously fixed itself upon the true God: we are all gone astray, and we each pursue the objects which most accord with our natural disposition and taste, to the dishonour of the Almighty, and to the increased alienation of the heart from Him. Let us deal uprightly, and search out our own idol—ask with integrity, Is it in conforming ourselves to the vain superstitions of an apostate church? Is it in inordinate love of self? Is it in the surrender of the heart to some creature? Is it in the love of filthy lucre, of pleasure, or ease? Is it in an abuse of the privileges and means of grace, *resting* in these, without aspiring

higher? Ascertaining wherein we may have committed the sin, we must obey the call to deep humiliation; and understanding hereby wherein we are likely to be endangered in future, we must direct our utmost vigilance to that quarter, lest we should again be deceived and betrayed. The gospel of Christ is designed for the cure of this grievous condition of miserable man. God has been pleased to reveal himself in characters most alluring, by appearing in the wilderness world upon the work of redemption and recovery to lost souls. By this manifestation he has commended himself to the sinner, and has procured the divine operation of the Eternal Spirit, whose office it is to deliver the soul from apostacy, alienation, and all the miseries of the fall. The promise is, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." This promise is fulfilled in the Spirit's power, who casts down the vain imaginations, and disperses the darkness, and destroys the enmity under which we naturally groan, and having effected conviction and conversion, causes the believer now to exclaim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" It is our duty, however, to seek the accomplishment of this deliverance, with vigour proportioned to our conviction of the monstrous nature of this apostacy from God: and since the revelation of God in Christ, proclaimed to us in the gospel, is the means through which we obtain

clearer discoveries of these truths, our meditations should perpetually turn upon the contents of this sacred book; the wonderful excellencies of the true God should become the theme on which we dwell, placing before our thoughts, his greatness, his goodness, his grace, and seeking to realize him in every object of nature, and in every possession of mercy which surrounds us. We should continually engage our minds in drawing the comparison between him and the creature, that we may obtain a stronger impression upon the excellent privilege of possessing him as our portion, and the comparative vanity and emptiness of all created streams. This conviction should be deepened by reference to our own *experience*, having had occasion to *know* that it is not in any possession that the world affords, separately from the blessing of God, to give real or lasting happiness to the soul; and that, very frequently, our most bitter disappointments and griefs have arisen from those things which we have the most idolized. We should labour to understand this voice of the Lord, and seeing that "Vanity" is written upon all human possessions, learn that it is vain and wicked to *confide* in them.

In entering upon the next subject that will engage our inquiry, we shall perceive how powerfully our gracious God will own the upright endeavour after freedom from this curse of a fallen condition; but at this moment we

shall do well if we meditate upon the statement which gives us so awful a view of the ruin of the universal world, and of the deep destruction into which we ourselves are fallen as sinners; and knowing that the judgment of God is against all that commit the crime of idolatry, either in its gross or in its subtle character; and that none such can enter the kingdom of heaven, some sighs of anxiety should break from our hearts, and some appeal for God's rescuing and forgiving mercy be heard from our lips!

But let us now seek confirmation to this statement from the word of God, by which it is necessary that we confirm whatever is advanced as a matter of faith.

That God has prohibited the use of images, &c. is absolutely and constantly declared.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." Ex. xx. 4, 5.

"And in all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect; and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth." Ex. xxiii. 13.

"Turn ye not unto idols, nor make to yourselves molten gods. I am the Lord your God." Lev. xix. 4.

"Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols." Psalm xcvii. 7.

That all division of the heart also, and all inordinate natural affection, upon whatever object it may act, is considered idolatrous.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Ex. xx. 3.

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided." Hos. x. 1, 2.

"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." 2 Tim. iii. 4.

"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." Rom. i. 25.

That this is an awful attendant upon the fall of man, and belongs to the whole human race in some form.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest— idolatry." Gal. v. 19, 20.

That idolators must perish, having no place in the kingdom of heaven, is as positively affirmed.

"And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and

idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away; as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." Hos. xiii. 2, 3. See also 1 Cor. v. 10, 11; vi. 9, 10. Rev. xxi. 8; xxii. 15.

And that where God accepts and saves a soul, he delivers it from this condition, and cleanses the heart from idols.

"For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin." Isa. xxxi. 7. See also Ez. xxxvi. 25, 26. Hos. xiv. 3, 8.

FAITH IN THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AS OPPOSED TO IDOLATRY.

According to our arrangement, we have now to consider, how sinners are delivered from idolatrous abominations, and what is the nature of that principle by which they are brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God. We have seen the miserable effects of the fall in the universal departure of the creature from the Creator; and we have also seen how awfully this departure was produced; not merely by darkness in the understanding, but by depravity in the heart. Idolatry followed upon ignorance, and was confirmed, by the *preference* of such objects of worship as were favourable to the indulgence of human pride and lust, and man became the *willing* slave of his own delusions, and the determined opposer of every means by which such infatuation might have been dispersed. God would have been righteous, had he delivered up the whole creation to the effects of this wretched choice. Confusion and desolation were justly merited, as divine judgments upon an apostate race, and the fixed

resolve of a sinful heart, to cleave to its idols, might righteously have been followed by an irrevocable sentence—"Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Hos. iv. 17. But mercy has abounded, and God has magnified his grace, by extending the healing benefits of a covenant into which he freely entered for man, and by which light breaks upon the darkened universe, and in that light *God* is seen!—Once more Jehovah is known and possessed by the creature man, and again the Almighty Source of all life and bounty is exalted in the affections of the subjects of his power. This, however, is effected, not by any visible display of His splendour, by which the senses of sinners might be addressed and overwhelmed:—God is the eternal *invisible* One, whom eye hath not seen, and whose uncreated glories must ever remain unsearchable; and since the fall of Adam had deprived human nature of all faculty whereby spiritually to discern the Holy One, there remained no method by which he could be revealed, but by imparting a *new* faculty, which should compensate for the loss of original power. This faculty is *faith*, which is the gift of God, provided by covenant love, and wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost. Through this instrument sinners are enabled to *receive* the revelation which Jehovah gives, and by it to use that revelation to the purposes for which it is ordained of God. The operation of faith, to the cure of

idolatry, is powerful and prevailing. To this branch of its appointed office we are now to confine ourselves; and it should be very interesting to trace its progress, running parallel with all the requirements, and applying the remedy to the soul of man, exactly where and as the disease demands.

In the first place, it enables a man, not only to believe that there is a supreme Being, but to apprehend the *character* of that Being. The sacred scriptures are the means by which it is discovered, that the great Creator is an infinite self-existent and eternal Spirit;—that in the Godhead, which is One, there are three distinct Persons;—that this glorious Godhead is infinite in *excellence* also, being unlimited in power, truth, holiness, love, and mercy;—and faith, laying hold upon this revelation, confesses the only God, and adores him with a spiritual discernment of his nature and of his perfections. Consequently upon such faith, the absurdity and monstrous folly of representing this Jehovah by images, pictures, stocks, and stones, will immediately appear: and thus a man is cured of the sin of gross idolatry, by the entrance of light, prevailing, through the faculty of faith, to illumine the understanding, and persuade the judgment and heart. Filled with conviction and resolve, the soul is ready to exclaim—"What have I to do any more with idols?" and to demonstrate the integrity of the persuasion, by

casting them "to the moles and to the bats." The various objects, which were previously subjects of temptation, now occupy their proper station, and are contemplated, or possessed, in subordination to the glory of the Giver; and faith, directing the soul into suitable exercises, takes occasion from the creatures of God to rise to God himself, and to realize him in all things, as worthy to receive tributes of homage and honour. When, raising the eyes heavenwards, and beholding the glory of the firmament, sun, moon, and stars are beheld as the work of his hands, and as demonstrations of his goodness to man. When occupied in the history of nations, and engaged in tracing the downfal of empires, the exaltation of realms, the race of the conquerors, and the achievements of heroes, deliverers and mighty men, he realizes the *divine* government in the whole, looks to the Supreme Director of human affairs, and, whilst the sense of human vileness conducts him to thoughts of abasement, the sight of divine compassions leads to the high strain of praise. Creatures are considered as Jehovah's subjects and instruments, through which he performeth the counsel of his own will. And in this rank he is enabled to place Satan also; who, though great and dreadful as the apostate prince of darkness, is known through faith to be a subjugated foe, whose powers are limited by the divine decree, and

whose utmost fury can never pass the bounds of the eternal will.

The same blessed deliverance is experienced, as it respects spiritual idolatry, or that subtle corruption which works in the heart, to draw it from simplicity of allegiance. And here we may examine the operation of faith with unfeigned delight, as affording the strongest encouragement to trust for an entire liberty from the bondage of our old idolatrous nature. So wonderful is this grace, when energized by the Holy Ghost, and put upon its proper work, that nothing can withstand its purifying resolve. The idol *self* is hereby dethroned: whatever particular mode it has adopted, in order to absorb attention, or to obtain gratification, it now feels the effectual blow, which is received through the knowledge of God's supremacy, and of his right of government towards the whole man; it is now perceived that it belongs to God, to impart, according to his own will, the measure and continuance of every personal gift, whether of life, character, talents, beauty, influence, or any other attendant upon this state of existence; and with this persuasion there is also a holy acquiescence, so that through faith God's appointment is preferred to self-will, and the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Lord so appreciated, that such an one is contented to behold the decay of nature, to experience the

loss of character or influence, to meet the disappointments and mortifications which arise in the world, and to encounter any thing, however contrary to nature and self-love, if only it is ascertained—*this is God's will.* Self lays subdued at the feet of the Lord; it is cast from the throne, and God in his supreme and excellent greatness is exalted in its place!

By the same gracious power, *creatures* are also brought into their proper station; they do not cease to possess the strong affection of the heart, for it was never God's design to *destroy* natural affections; but as they have usurped upon the rights of the Almighty, it is necessary that they should be reproved and regulated. This is done through faith. The parent, child, friend, lover, or associate, are held in dependance upon the will of the Lord, and as merciful loans through which he designs to benefit and comfort his creatures, but they are not lodged in the heart as idols, they can be relinquished and resigned at God's command; and although pain and anguish will be felt sometimes at the loosing of these earthly ties, the power of faith interposes, and arrests the torrent of natural passion. It is remembered that the Lord gave and that he also takes away, and that although bereft of every human consolation, *God remains* the same parent, friend, and companion, from whom nothing can separate the soul, and in whom there is a sufficient portion for time and eternity.

So also in the experience of those desertions and disappointments, which are common in human connexions; or in those persecutions, and that treachery which is sometimes experienced, faith keeps the soul from sinking, by reminding of the sure refuge; and thus creatures are possessed by a just estimate, and through these faith looks to the true, the eternal, and the all-sufficient God. Should the native propensity be shown in an idolatrous love of money, or in devotion to pleasure, faith is given that it may act with equal triumph over these idols: property and time are revealed to the soul in a very different light through this medium, and a man is taught that he has no right independently to hold any possession, for that he is God's steward, and answerable for his silver and gold, and for his hours and days. These are in consequence brought in to be tributary to that God who now reigns in the heart, and whatever money can effect or time promote, of God's glory and the benefit of men, that is the object to which they are now consecrated. The perishable mammon of this world is now sent forth into channels where the cause of truth or humanity have a claim, and the moments once spent in dissipation or indolence, are now redeemed for the high service of Christ, and the cultivation of the soul for eternity. The same spirit is carried into those means of grace which the Lord hath appointed for the assistance

of the soul in this pursuit; no longer is the minister or ordinance, the heart's idol; these are valued and loved as God's instruments, and gratitude is lively for every advantage that the spiritual teacher affords; nevertheless, it is remembered, that although Paul may plant and Apollos water, God only gives the increase, and therefore *in* means, *he* is the chief object sought and approached, and *without* means the soul is kept from despondency or discontent, believing that the Fountain is always near, and that Jehovah will keep and feed his sheep even where outward pastures are most barren and dry. Thus this excellent grace of faith, in God's hand, is the instrument to cure the sin of native idolatry, in all its parts. It does so by giving discoveries of the one only God, and by enthroning him supremely in the understanding and the heart.

Upon an upright examination of ourselves, we shall not be able to plead guiltless of a sin which is stigmatized throughout the scriptures with terms expressive of God's utter abhorrence, for we are all idolaters, and every human breast hath its *household gods*, until purged by the grace of God's power put forth to deliver the soul. It is of importance, therefore, that we should be equally capable of ascertaining that this deliverance has been experimentally known in our hearts; and knowing it we should ex-

ercise constant gratitude for the wonderful dispensation. Increased illumination of mind is to be sought. In proportion to our discoveries of Jehovah's excellence will be our detestation of every unworthy representation of his Majesty; and if this discernment is attended with correspondent excitement in the affections, we shall carry our abhorrence of idolatry into all those hidden channels through which our desires run. Thus we shall be preserved from falling into the sin of loving the creature more than the Creator, or of proving disloyal to him unto whom we owe our all, and from whom we are receiving renewed and perpetual blessings, that should bind us in allegiance to his name. And let us be encouraged in making the honest effort after enjoyment of this liberty, desperate as the struggle may prove, and suffering as the sacrifice may be to which we are particularly called, God is faithful to his own promise, and will always proportion our strength to our day: faith can invigorate for every difficulty, and in the power of this gracious principle, we shall be enabled to bring our most beloved idols an offering to God. There is no requirement on the part of the Lord, that has not a provision for its fulfilment also; and it is a temptation, arising out of the coward or reluctant flesh, when we hesitate and dread the blow. We must not listen to the arguments which corrupt nature would propose. God has made the demand; it

is our duty to obey; in sacrificing what he prohibits, we are consulting for our own preservation eternally, and for our happiness in time; were it not so, the Lord would not require what gives us pain. If we are persuaded of this, it should follow that we unconditionally yield to the divine voice, and that through faith we proceed to manifest, that there is no rival in our heart that shall have a more prevailing influence, or be suffered to dispute the Lord's sovereign sway. Herein we hearken to counsels that are all designed for our own true exaltation and peace; and soon shall we prove, that in following the Spirit's divine injunctions, we have found the unutterable peace, which compensates for every earthly trial. A tribute of praise is due also; for when we consider our own desert, we may justly stand amazed at the sovereign love on God's part, through which we hear the warning, and have faith to accept it; and whilst we contemplate the ruin of thousands who live after the flesh, and whose idols are daily absorbing the whole of those offerings which are due only to God, we may well ascribe the glory of our discoveries, and desires, to the grace of the covenant in Christ; for to these vanities we also ourselves were once devoted, wandering far from every real privilege, "without God in the world!"

But can we prove from the Scriptures that

Jehovah has freely and graciously provided for man's soul a cure of his idolatry by the grace of faith?

"Purifying their hearts by faith." Acts xv. 9.

How is it affirmed in the Scriptures that Jehovah is one great, self-existent, and holy Being? "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Ex. iii. 14.

"God is a Spirit." John iv. 24. See also Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.

What testimony have we that there exists three persons in the one Godhead?

"And now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Isa. xlviii. 16. See also Matt. iii. 17; xxviii. 19. John xiv. 16, 17, 23.

Can we prove that saving faith apprehends this revelation so as to deliver the soul from every species of idolatry, exalting God in the heart in his true and sovereign character?

The following Scriptures prove the several points stated: Isaiah ii. 20. Hosea xiv. 8. Gen. i. 14—18. Psalm cxlviii. 3—5. Isaiah xliv. 26;

xlv. 1—3. Job i. 12. Rom. xvi. 20. John iii. 30. 2 Cor. v. 14—17. Psalm lxxiii. 25. Micah vii. 5—7. Phil. ii. 17. 2 Cor. viii. 5. Jer. iii. 23. 1 Cor. iii. 6.

Is this condition requisite and happy to the creature?

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Col. i. 9. See also Eph. iii. 16—19. Hab. iii. 17, 18. Psalm cxvi. 7.

SELF-CONFIDENCE.

In order to understand the nature of that evil upon the discussion of which we now enter, it will be proper, in the first place, to call to mind what is intended by *Confidence*. It signifies trust, assurance, and bold resolve, being a disposition of mind through which a man commits himself without fear to any person, project, or undertaking. Thus we say, I have perfect confidence in such an one, or I am confident that such and such plans, &c. must succeed. *Self*-confidence is the exercise of this disposition upon somewhat which a man supposes himself to possess: *he ventures*, and acts, relying upon an innate capability, in which he is confident he cannot fail of success in his measures. There is no sinner that is free from this evil, although it may appear more prominently and visibly in some than in others; and the very readiness with which, at the moment of being charged with such a propensity, many persons are prompt to disclaim it, and to affirm, whatever I am, I certainly am not self-confident, is a decided evidence of its existence; for to be assured of any

good thing in the flesh, or to imagine that there is any evil thing which is not in the flesh, argues that this corrupt confidence has not been removed. It arises out of pride, and ignorance, and is confirmed and increased by the influence of Satan. The darkness of our understanding has prevailed to obscure all spiritual objects around us: we are not only ignorant of God, but are entirely unacquainted with the disease of our nature; and in addition to this, we vainly flatter ourselves that we are in the possession of certain native qualities that are excellent, and to which at least on some occasions we may confidently turn. Thus the Scriptures declare, "the *fool* rageth and is confident:" and again, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a *fool*." It is then the effect of folly; and the *pride* which accompanies the disposition is continually evinced in the very same spirit that betrayed the Jews of old, who repelling the charge of bondage and blindness, exclaimed, "We were never in bondage to any," and, "Are we blind also?" And in this state Satan has full possession of the whole inward man, keeping his goods in peace, and deepening the ruinous delusion of the sinner by confirmed and increasing security.

Self-confidence may be possessed in different forms; or it may, according to the particular disposition, make for itself some favourite strong hold. For example, some persons have an exceeding degree of this spirit in respect of the

capability of judgment or understanding; they suppose themselves to be endowed with a more than ordinary share of wisdom and discretion of mind, and that upon whatever subject they may turn their attention, they are capable of forming a just and adequate estimate of truth. How far this persuasion extended in religious topics, during the time of Christ's ministration, is evident; and how fearfully it continued to prevail, we read. The Apostle Paul severely rebuked the Jews on this ground, showing the arrogancy with which they concluded themselves capable of being instructors of others, "And art *confident* that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness?" By the same disposition, he had also himself been well nigh ruined everlastingly, when he thought *with himself* (according to his own judgment) that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Christ. And the same proud pretension is the prevailing feature in many men of every generation, leading them implicitly to confide in the dictates of their own mind, and presumptuously to determine that their system or standard of judgment is altogether right.

Others are disposed to a confident persuasion of their own high, generous, and honourable feeling; they conceive themselves able in the cause of friendship, or justice, to adventure every thing, and that it is impossible for them to be faithless to an interest, which they have once

heartily embraced: they are confident in themselves, and would pledge themselves upon any conditions to abide by that which they profess to be worthy their regard. This disposition is carried also into matters of worldly transaction, or of religious profession; and many there are who confidently boast of their integrity; that they pay to all their due; that they could not disgrace themselves by a mean or dishonest action; and that in religion they are strict, righteous and obedient, or, whether making a profession or not, incapable of hypocrisy.

We may be further assisted in our view of this subject, and in the judgment which we ought to pass upon ourselves, by inquiring into the several *demonstrations* which the self-confident will give of their sin.

It is betrayed by an arrogant intrusion of opinions, and a love of contention and dispute. The self-confident man speaks his judgment upon any matters discussed in his presence, without hesitation, without deference to others, and without any expectation that he can be exposed to wiser or stronger arguments, which might prove the fallacy of his own: he loves to give advice; he delights in an opportunity to propose some new opinion; and towards others he feels and he looks the most supercilious contempt, if their judgment in any degree opposes his: so it is said, "every fool will be meddling." For the same evidence of presump-

tion the Corinthians were sharply reproved, who were disposed to intrude upon their religious assemblies their own particular views, 1 Cor. xiv. 26; and, by this high conceit of self, many were determinately opposed, even to the clearest witness of the gospel, counting the apostles themselves but "*babblers.*"

Some mens' self-confidence is visible in the assurance with which they enter into, or desire, offices and stations in life, for which, however little they may be qualified, they suppose themselves entirely capable; they arrogantly presume that, were they elevated into the condition possessed by other men, they should be better managers of the trust reposed, and that government, laws, judgment, &c. would be discharged with much more impartiality and excellence. This opinion will be betrayed by the self-confident in all stations, and in reference to any kind of service to which their ambition may be directed; and whether it is as a minister of state, or minister in religion, a domestic servant, or any other particular calling, such a man would not hesitate in entering the service from any distrust of himself; and if found defective in the duties he has undertaken, casts the blame of his failure, or attributes the expression of dissatisfaction from his superiors, not to his own want of ability, but to some accident, or some prejudice which has prevailed against him. Where the mind is under

the power of this corruption, we may reasonably expect to see the scene of temptation entered without awe or fear. What is it which such a man dreads? He has no distrust of his own strength; he has no idea of the strength which belongs to Satan, or to sin; he boldly ventures into the forbidden path, and treads in the midst of peril, without apprehending a fall. Thus we see ourselves surrounded by those who, notwithstanding the prohibitory commands of God, and all the warnings which are directed against the broad way, choose to travel through its snares, and, engaging themselves in the pursuit of riches, honours, and pleasures, with an eager desire after gratification, and with a hardy pretence that, however dangerous such situations might be to certain dispositions and characters, they are harmless in their own case, since they flatter themselves that they have prudence, or resolution, or virtue, or grace sufficient to keep them from infection, or to check them ere they go too far. Many a self-confident man will, on this ground, mix with the world, trifle with temptation, enter into dissipation, and say, 'Hitherto will I go, and no further. A *little* of this object may give me satisfaction, and I have command over my appetites, so that more than is good I can at once deny.' And too often it is seen amongst professors, who, although they know the divine precept which enjoins to "come out and be

separate," and to "abstain from the appearance of evil," will wanton with the occasions wherein thousands have perished, and confidently expose themselves to assaults from the enemy, trusting that they shall escape and triumph finally.

The spirit of security, and carnal ease, is visible in the habitual course of the self-confident; he is little troubled respecting divine judgments, the expectation of death, or any future retributions; he is satisfied to possess those customary ordinances in which he *feeds without fear*, and looks for no evil day, wherein his confidences shall fail him; on the contrary, he supposes that he shall always have a refuge near against the time of trial, and that he shall at all times be able to retreat into his own works, or frames, or fortitude, and that these shall be in future as they are now a place of security, whither no storm can pursue him.

We may observe upon another striking demonstration of the state of self-confidence, in which most persons betray themselves daily. It is that of loudly declaiming against others, with an assertion at the same time that they *wonder* at their provocations, and that *they could not have done so.* And what possible ground have we upon which to place this confidence of our own incapability to do the evil deed? Are we naturally more holy? Are we more strong? Have we a greater degree of native integrity before God? Where is our superiority? Are

we not all of *one* nature, and are we not all alike by nature at enmity with God, and altogether and desperately wicked? So the Scripture affirms, and so experience testifies; and the fact is, that there is no sin of which we are not capable, were suitable temptation to be presented, and were God to leave us to the proof of what we are without his preventing or restraining grace. It therefore argues great self-confidence, when, in opposition to this truth, we deal out our rash censures against other men, and make their sins an occasion for self-complacency in our own imagined superiority.

By these and many other grievous ways, sinners are perpetually demonstrating their own folly, and betraying a condition of soul that is wholly unmeet for the kingdom of God, whether of grace or of glory. Let us be assured that this spirit can never meet the approval of the Lord; it is inconsistent with *truth*, for man is a poor helpless and degraded creature, having neither wisdom, nor virtue, nor strength of his own; his vain confidences are the refuges of lies, and he builds a superstructure of hopes and expectations, and assurances, that are all placed upon the sand. Trial proves it to be thus; for when he is put to the proof of what he has, he fails. Never, therefore, can God confirm the delusion, by giving any degree of approval to a man so long as he is *self-confident*.

In addition to this, it is a state that wars against the glory of God. It does not admit the fact of man's revolt and degradation, it does not acknowledge the grace of God's forbearance and mercy, it does not accept the method by which sinners are accepted and secured, and it is full of such a spirit of arrogance as is provoking to divine justice and truth, and must be followed by divine rebuke and vengeance. We also perceive, both from scripture and from living examples, that wherever the Lord brings a sinner to himself, he cures this disease, and so powerfully convinces him of his own nothingness, that he ceases to have any confidence in the flesh, and considers himself altogether unclean, and a debtor in every respect to the infinite love of God.

This being the case, we are required to look to the evidences of our own character, lest we be found with such as have not entered into Christ's kingdom upon earth; for we must become his disciples here if we are his inheritance hereafter; and discipleship is shown in the decrease of all self-trust, and the advancing possession of a confidence founded upon better, and more enduring materials, than any which nature provides. Since, however, we are each in the miserable ruin that surrounds us with occasions, wherein the inward corruption breaks forth, we have to seek after the omnipotent remedies, which can alone deliver us. These

are found in the fulness of mercy and salvation that are in our God, and to him we must look in the spirit of wrestling prayer and importunity, beseeching that his interposition may give us succour. Let the sacrifice of self-confidence begin here, expressed in the cry of humility proffered at God's throne; and if in any measure aware of the dangers to which self-confidence leads, let us pray that the Holy Spirit would so undertake our souls, as to liberate us from this bond of an evil nature.

We have, however, to remember, that the cure of this deep-seated malady, will not be effected but by painful measures; we *will* not be made whole, without passing through such humiliating discoveries of our own weakness and depravity, as strike at the root of our vanity; no revelations, however plain and faithful, no evidences in other men however striking and awful, no counsel from friends however experienced and good, will prevail upon us to think as we ought to think of ourselves; and alas! too often, the most obstinate perverseness is betrayed which resists the evidence that crowds in upon us from our own miscarriages and inconsistencies; all is vain until God is pleased to multiply our causes for abasement, and to sanctify the distressing discoveries which are thus presented from our own hearts, and we are made "to remember all the way which the Lord our God has led us in the wilderness, to

humble us, and to prove us, to know what was in our heart." Deut. viii. 2. Possibly we are at this time amongst such persons as have obtained a degree of conviction upon this subject; if so, let us be thankful for the timely revelation; but let us not relapse, nor ever go back into a state of self-security: we should stem the torrent of this natural tendency, by *using* the discoveries of the past for present caution; and frequently the mind should revert to those occasions wherein self-confidence conducted us to ruin. How many are the seasons, wherein we have committed great error in judgment in temporal affairs, in our opinion of others, in religious doctrines, in the estimate of our own character, motives, and principles; how often have we ventured beyond the narrow line that duty prescribed, and found ourselves unexpectedly entangled in difficulties? how frequently have we experienced, that our boasted zeal and resolution have been somewhat like Peter's, and that when we have mixed with Christ's enemies we have not sufficiently and visibly differed from them? In how many things have we failed because we were too confident of success, and entered upon responsibility without dependance and prayer; and how continually might we take up the language of one of old in this respect, and exclaim with bitter regret, "I have played the fool and erred exceedingly!" Such retrospective views are

not to evaporate without profit, we should embrace them with abiding impressions, and whilst we adore and bless the grace that has so often rescued, borne with, and helped us, we should dread the approach of similar temptations, and keep far from the edge of the precipice by seeking to keep down presumption, and to be delivered from self-confidence. We may also derive instruction from observation upon the conduct of others. We evidently perceive that in all instances wherein our fellow men, or fellow Christians, have committed this sin, the consequences have been such as we should deprecate. At this moment we look upon thousands, who are hurrying headlong down the road that leads direct to everlasting destruction, urged on by the impelling principle of self-confidence; they are sure they are in the right, or they are confident that they shall be able to make themselves so; their ears are closed against counsel, and their minds are inflated with pride. Will they not "perish in their own deceivings?" Yes verily, unless the Lord's strong arm stops them in their course, and self-confidence is cast down. How many, even amongst such as we trust shall through discipline be brought to a better condition of grace, are found with the name of Jesus on their lip, but with no self-abasement in the heart; or, who, self-ignorant, do still presume to direct their own paths! Are they not perpetually de-

filed by inconsistency, and exposed to distress? We know they are; and whilst we compassionate, or sympathise with them in their distress, we should read the affecting lesson as full of instruction to ourselves. Our conviction and excitement will be deepened by turning to God's word, and examining the full tide of witness, which stands in the record, upon this important subject.

Can we confirm this statement of man's confidence in his own sufficiency, by any corresponding testimony from the scripture?

"The fool rageth, and is confident." Prov. xiv. 16.

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Prov. xxviii. 26.

Does it consist of assurance in personal power of judgment?

"The time cometh that whoever killeth you will *think* that he doeth God service." John xvi. 2. See also John ix. 34. Acts xxvi. 9. Rom. ii. 19.

Is it found in the supposition of an innate virtue, strength, fortitude, &c?

"The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess." Luke

xviii. 11, 12. See also Jer. ii. 23. 35. Luke xxii. 33.

Can we produce any evidence that self-confidence is demonstrated by arrogant intrusion of opinions, doctrines?

"Every fool will be meddling." Prov. xx. 3. See also 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

Is it evidenced by contempt of others?

"A fool despiseth his father's instruction." Prov. xv. 5. See also Prov. xii. 15. Acts xvii. 18.

Will it lead men to enter into offices and to assume stations for which they are not prepared?

"Folly is set in great dignity." Eccl. x. 5—7.

Does it conduct a man presumptuously into scenes of temptation?

"Peter sat down amongst them." Luke xxii. 55.

Is it attended with security and carnal ease?

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you feeding themselves, without fear." Jude 12.

Do the self-confident suppose themselves incapable of perpetrating crimes, which they profess to abhor?

"But what is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" 2 Kings viii. 13.

Is not this disposition incompatible with a state of acceptance with God?

"For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Phil. iii. 3.

Should we not watch and pray against this sin? "Simon, sleepest *thou?* couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye *enter* into temptation." Mark xiv. 37, 38. See also Deut. viii. 2, 3.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

HAVING investigated the sin of self-confidence, we have now to turn our inquiry upon the state of grace that is opposed to this evil; calling to mind, that by confidence we mean trust, assurance, and bold resolve, and showing how powerfully the Spirit of the Lord rectifies the erroneous direction of this disposition, by turning it to its proper object, and causing the sinner to exercise all these affections upon God alone; so that whilst experience proves that he has no ground for repose upon any thing in himself, he learns to confide in one in whom he shall be supplied with all things necessary to his present and eternal security, and by whom all his pursuits must be made successful.

That confidence which is wrought in the regenerate, is of a peculiar nature; it stands on the strong foundation that is proclaimed in the revelation of God, apprehending and appropriating the divine perfections, as so many places of refuge provided in covenant mercy for man. There is a *general* knowledge of God, which enables a man confidently to believe that he is

able to defend, and will protect; but although this is the habitual state of a believer's soul, it does not sufficiently describe the exercise of the affiance now in question; such confidence implies that the action of faith is vigorous and *particular*, laying hold upon that attribute which the special time of need requires, and with trust, assurance, and bold resolve, casting the soul upon its sufficiency, and acting with correspondent determination. Thus the language of the heart is, I know that Jehovah is infinite in his perfections; I believe that through this infinite power in my God I shall prosper; I must succeed; in short, it is this, I have perfect confidence in my God.

We may, for further elucidation of this part of the subject, take for example, the perfections of wisdom, faithfulness, and strength, infinitely possessed by Jehovah. The believer realizes that he is possessed of infinite understanding, so that all his counsels and all his judgments must be without imperfection, and beyond the possibility of mistake. His providences and government are considered by this standard, and consequently he is prepared, whilst renouncing his *own* wisdom and judgment, to enter into that which never can fail him, and through which he knows that all things are regulated and ordained by an excellent rule. He equally apprehends the glory of the divine faithfulness, and is persuaded that all which the Lord pro-

mises he will perform. He believes Him incapable of desertion, or of change, and that being of one mind, He will never forsake the cause, or leave the soul that He has once espoused. He rests upon this truth, and, when turning away from the false conceit of his own generous and faithful nature, he delights in the unchangeableness of the eternal God, and believes that here he may confidently trust his all, —a confidence which is increased by the perception of His infinite strength by which He is able to accomplish His designs, overturning every adversary, and treading down his opposers in His own uncreated and divine majesty. Faith enables the believer firmly to apprehend these glories, as the suitable and the only ground upon which man may put forth trust, assurance, and bold resolve, and as made the ground for man, by reason of the covenant in Christ, through which the divine perfections are engaged and pledged to him, and his own insufficiency and weakness are remedied by the provision of infinite fulness and grace.

It is by this spiritual discernment that the soul is prepared to *act* correspondently; and it is interesting to observe, how this action will appear according to the view we have had of *self*-confidence, putting the believer, in many instances, exactly in the *same* circumstances, though with this different direction of his ex-

pectations. Let us examine the operation of grace in this method.

The first demonstration of *self*-confidence, laid down in the last subject, was that of a bold and arrogant manifestation of a man's own opinion, judgment, &c. Are we to conclude that because this is evil, therefore man must remain without any confidence that he is right, or that his opinions are true, sure, and abiding? This would be to contradict what is evidently necessary for the discharge of the concerns of this life; for with such indecision a man would be unfit for the least duty, and would not meet any of his responsibilities with consistency. In religion it would be ruinous; for in such a case he would be carried away with every wind of doctrine, and suffer great injury in his soul, amidst the various schisms, heresies, and errors that abound in the world. The apostle speaks of such uncertainty in doctrine, and practice, with great severity; and examples of its deadly consequences are innumerable. It is therefore necessary that a man should seek to know the whole counsel of God, and that he should come to such maturity and assurance, as to be able to cast his own salvation upon what he believes, with resolve and unshaken trust; and that he should likewise be so possessed of assurance that he is right, that he may boldly plead and contend for the faith once delivered to the

saints, and speak with authority and determination upon the subject which he seeks to enforce. All this may be done without arrogance, and will necessarily follow a well grounded confidence in God. Christ Jesus is made unto us *wisdom*. He imparts to his people an understanding by which they shall be enabled to discriminate between truth and error, first exercising them in prayer, teachableness, and diligent study of the scriptures, and through these means giving the unction of the Holy Ghost; hereby, as the word of God expressly declares, *they know all things*, and need not that any man should teach them; they are all taught of God, and so surely taught, that Christ comforts his disciples, by showing, that amidst the heresies that would prevail, none should be able to deceive God's elect. Thus, *confidence in God* will lead a man to confidence in the knowledge and wisdom that he has obtained through him; in this confidence he will be ready also to propose his opinions, and to give counsel to others; and although he will do it in meekness and self-government, he will speak with decision, and be unshaken in his views.

In respect of situations of trust and responsibility, we shall also behold the true believer ready to stand forth, and even on some occasions *seeking* the offices wherein great duties are entailed. This is the effect of a true spiritual discernment into the nature of those services to

which God appoints his people. Were they to look to their own qualifications, or calculate upon their own abilities, they would shrink from the charge; but when satisfied that the call is *providentially* given, they look out of self into the promise and power of God, and become *confident in him;* they know that all wisdom, strength, utterance, influence, &c. come from him, so that if he gives a particular work to any chosen servant, none can render it abortive; the same will that gave the charge will also give the capability, and qualify all his subjects for their several offices. If tempted to say, "Lord I am a child, I cannot speak," the recollection arises which corrects this unbelief, for God has promised to give a mouth and utterance, and faith is confident that he will not fail; immediately such an one will cease to consult with flesh and blood, and the situation, however arduous and difficult, will be cheerfully accepted; any failure in duty, &c. will be ascribed to some defect in self, not remedied by the exercise of faith, but the faithfulness and power of God will be justified.

Even such situations as may be peculiarly styled places of temptation, if evidently laying in the way of God's appointment, will not be started from, nor dreaded, because the soul can exercise an assurance in the Lord's vigilant care; the peril may be great, but the promise is greater; God knows how to keep his children

in the hour of temptation, he makes a way to escape, and he is with them in the fiery trial. Thus, whilst the Christian is fully aware of the necessity that he should not rashly and presumptuously expose himself, and so tempt the Lord, yet he can boldly enter where he knows temptation awaits him, for his confidence in God is put into action, he throws himself upon his protection, and so defended, he is assured that he shall be secure. Thus Daniel, Obadiah, and others, continued to occupy highly perilous posts, undaunted by the dangers that encompassed them, because they were *confident in their God.*

Though sensible of the capability which he has to commit all manner of sin, the believer *is* privileged in a certain way to feel, and to affirm, that he shall *not* commit it. Here a peculiar and wonderful privilege is possessed, and we should carefully examine a point of interest that so deeply concerns every regenerate soul. Regeneration imparts an unconquerable principle of holiness, which is ever tending upwards, and always restlessly working to the diffusion of holy influences through the whole man. Sin is inconsistent with this principle, and when a believer lives up to his privilege, *walking in the Spirit,* he shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; a divine and efficacious operation pervades his whole soul and mind, and in such a frame it is said of him, he sinneth not; "he cannot commit sin;" not that he is incapable of sin, but he is

indisposed to it, through the presence and power of the new life that is in him. This new life is given and maintained by the Lord; the Lord has *engaged* also to keep the soul that cleaves to him from the power of the enemy; "sin shall not have dominion over you," and therefore, if cleaving to him, and walking in all humble labour after obedience, he may be confident, he *is* confident in his God, and can say as a privileged man, I shall not do the abominable thing which God hateth, he who loves me will not leave me; nor is it possible that he should suffer the lion to tear and rend the lamb that lays in his bosom, and hangs upon him for defence.

The same spirit, of holy affiance, will enable the believer to meet those difficulties, which lay in his way, through the persecuting disposition of his enemies. There are many perils of this description to which he is exposed, and which if contemplated by sense, or encountered in mere human strength, must be too mighty for his soul: but he is privileged to possess confidence in God for all these tribulations; and even should the flame be kindled upon him, and the horrors of torture, imprisonment, and deaths of frightful kind be appointed for his mortal body, he can calmly meet the foe in its most terrific form, being assured, that either the Lord will deliver or support; with bold resolve he can stand undaunted before an earthly tribunal, and with simple trust he can leave the issue of the contest

of his soul with the powers of darkness, to the infinitely wise appointment of his faithful Lord: out of weakness he is made strong, and waxing valiant in fight, he is enabled to turn to flight the armies of the aliens.

Amidst the uncertainties and vicissitude of time, he also can dwell securely, and feed himself in the pastures of grace "without fear:" he is assured that the Shepherd of Israel is ever with his flock, and that he never slumbereth nor sleepeth: it is his delight to dwell under the shadow of his protection and presence, and in his experience he realizes the promise, "I will feed them in a good pasture and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be, there shall they lie in a good fold:" and not only doth he believe, that his soul shall rejoice when provided with the rich abundance of ordinances and means of grace, but he can add to his assurance this confidence, "they shall dwell safely in the *wilderness*, and sleep in the *woods*." In this spirit the Christian sojourns here below, in a calm and holy equality of mind: he is grateful for the supply of outward helps, and for the time of toleration to the church, and he is not anxious about what may occur of painful change: he leaves the direction of spiritual interests with the great head of the church, and rejoices in knowing that he will govern all things well: his confidence is in his God.

Thus the believer is to be contemplated under

peculiarly great privileges; we follow him into the very situations wherein the *self*-confident are also seen, but we behold a very different result in their course: this difference arises out of the widely opposed conditions of their souls: he, who confides in his own imagined powers, advances on a presumptuous way that is full of delusion, and must end in perdition; but he who takes God for his defence, and confides in the sufficiency of his infinite helper, must progressively attain to increased victory, possessing substantial joys in this life, and reaching at length the blessed close of his pilgrimage in the fulfilment of every promise in Christ.

If our minds are properly embued with this subject, we must necessarily feel a correspondent excitement moving us to realize so high and vast a privilege. In all our pursuits after heavenly attainment, let us however remember the weakness and misery of a fallen soul, and that so great is the ruin under which we groan, that we are in our nature *wholly opposed* to true confidence in God, we are ready to seek rest in any thing, to build our hopes upon any thing, and to prop our failing expectations by any thing, *but* the promise of our God; and truly does the Lord describe this native alienation by saying, "there is no man that stirreth up himself to lay hold upon God." Were it not that God himself has resolved to possess a people

whose hearts should confide in him, no flesh would turn to this rock of salvation; and it is only by the grace of the covenant, through regeneration, that any man comes to rest under the shadow of the Almighty, or lifts up the voice of filial trust, crying, "Abba, Father." This act of grace is proclaimed in Jer. xiii. 11. the Lord affirming, that as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so *he* causeth to cleave unto him the whole house of Israel, to be to him a people; and thus also, we find the Psalmist confessing with grateful affiance, that the Lord had *caused* him to hope in his word. Notwithstanding, we are to use the helps which the Lord has appointed to the nourishment of this blessed disposition; and although the whole dependence must be placed upon the supply of the Holy Ghost, we are to adopt the scriptural measures which lead to the increase of simplicity and faith. We shall find assistance to confidence in God, by increase of self-knowledge, combined with experience of victories, &c. If we know our own weakness, we shall be prepared to believe that no victory has been obtained through our own strength; consequently, if we have obtained victories, we shall be sensible of a greater strength than our own, having interposed in our behalf. The evidence of past deliverances will therefore nourish *confidence:* we know he *has* been with us, how otherwise could we have been rescued from trouble, delivered in temptation,

assisted in argument, and brought through so many hosts of spiritual adversaries? we exclaim in the retrospect, "Through the help of my God I have run through a troop, I have leaped over a wall." This confidence animates the soul, not only to gratitude, but to assurance, for what may yet remain; and thus our very weakness conducts us to strength, our sense of personal impotency convincing us that all our attainments are made in divine sufficiency: It is in such moments that we truly and experimentally say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me," and, "when I am weak then am I strong." We may gather increase of confidence, also, from communion with others, who have experienced the same deliverances, or from observation upon the faithfulness of God's dealings to those who wait on him. These demonstrations of divine power and love, are intended to act upon his children as quickening testimonies; and it is by such means that we make progress in the exercise of this trust, assurance, and bold resolve; for the full tide of evidence, flowing in upon us, is great and unquestionable, that God is a sure refuge, and that his children shall never be confounded. We should also cherish the blessed sense of our own individual interest in his love. To feel that we are the Lord's is a sure defence against despondency or presumption: it teaches us to rise to the great and glorious provision of the covenant, fearing

no evil; and it reminds us of the consistency with which such an one should live, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and striving to live as becometh those who are interested in such an eternal heritage; and if we are walking habitually in this disposition, no doubt we shall also habitually triumph, and our confidence will increase yet more and more.

The advantages which flow from such a state of grace are many and great. God has been pleased to acknowledge the act of trust with a large portion of his favour, declaring throughout the Scriptures, that it is a disposition in which he delights: it gives glory to his name, and it is the legitimate expression of peace and reconciliation with him; nor do we ever find him placing any limit to the exercise, but rather requiring, that we trust in him at *all times*, that we "ask what we will," and that we "believe that we receive what we ask." Unspeakable inward peace must be the result, for it brings the soul to closest union with Christ, and establishes that free and confidential fellowship with him, which is the foretaste of the perfection of bliss in the fruition of his presence for ever; and he will not fail to keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is staid upon him, because he trusteth in him. What then will not follow, of comfort, hope, holiness, and every blessed fruit? Assuredly, in reference to this subject, we may

be entitled fully to exclaim, "Blessed is the man that is in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God."

Let us confirm this precious doctrine by looking to God's word for his sure witness, and inquiring if the covenant of grace has indeed provided a foundation on which the soul of man may thus securely repose.

"Counsel is mine, and *sound wisdom*: I am understanding; I have strength." Prov. viii. 14. See also Isaiah ix. 6, 7.

"My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Psalm lxxxix. 33. See also Isaiah xi. 4. Heb. i. 12.

"Their Redeemer is *strong;* the Lord of hosts is his name: he shall thoroughly plead their cause." Jer. l. 34. See also Isaiah xlii. 4; xl. 28—31. Eph. i. 11. Heb. vi. 17. Prov. xviii. 10.

How is it that man is brought to repose upon such a provision? is this disposition the effect of natural inclination? or is it a work of divine grace?

"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and *causest* to approach unto thee." Psalm lxv. 4. See also Isaiah lxiv. 7. Psalm cxix. 49. Gal. iv. 6.

Let us prove that this privilege enables a man, who has no help in himself, to go forth with trust, into the very situations where the *self*-confident presumptuously and to their own ruin are found.

That they who are confident in their God are privileged to possess firm persuasion of the truths they embrace, and to declare them.

"I have not shunned to *declare* unto you all the *counsel of God.*" Acts xx. 27. See also John iv. 42. Jude 3. Titus iii. 8.

That they may boldly enter into and desire responsible situations, if providentially called to fill them.

"But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Gal. i. 15, 16. See also Jer. i. 6—10. Acts vii. 24, 25.

That they may meet temptation, and are not required to quit situations of peculiar trial.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." 2 Peter ii. 9. See also James i. 2, 12. 1 Cor. x. 13. Rev. iii. 10.

That they may confidently believe they shall not sin whilst they live in their true privileges.

"We know that whosoever is born of God

sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God." 1 John v. 18, 19. See also 1 John iii. 9.

That they need not fear persecution, peril, or affliction.

"I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak then am I strong." 2 Cor. xii. 10. See also Heb. xi. 33, 34. Dan. iii. 16—18. Joel iii. 10.

That they may rest in security, being confident of provision and defence from their shepherd.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Psalm xxiii. 1, 2. See also Ezek. xxxiv. 14, 24, 25.

That this confidence in God is to be founded upon *covenant* faithfulness.

"I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Psalm lxxxix. 19. See the whole Psalm.

Cherished by growing sense of personal impotency compared with deliverances, and evidently and undeniably obtained.

"Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

Psalm lxiii. 7. See also Psalm xciv. 17—19. Heb. xiii. 6.

That observation upon God's truth, and mercy, to others, may give it increase.

"Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God." Psalm cxlvi. 5. See also Psalm x. 14.

That it should be accompanied with growing assurance of personal interest in the Lord.

"O God thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.... Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." Psalm lxxi. 17. 21. See also Cant. vii. 10.

We may with equal readiness prove that this disposition is acceptable, giving glory to God.

"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." John vi. 29. See also Matt. xxi. 22. Acts iv. 13. Psalm xi. 1.

And that he will acknowledge it with impartations of peace.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah xxvi. 3.

PRIDE.

THE sin of pride, upon the consideration of which we now turn our thoughts, is so universally an attendant upon the state of fallen man, that it should become exceedingly interesting and important to us to discover its character, and to follow its windings and subtle influences through our own heart and life. We are professedly engaged, as Christians, in seeking the destruction of our inbred corruptions; and, if we would discharge this responsibility with faithfulness, we must be unwearied in our investigation of our heart; and particularly in the present subject, we have to be upon our guard against those influences, from the very sin we desire to detect, which otherwise would prevent the uprightness of our inquiry, and blind our judgment by prejudice and partiality.

Pride is the inordinate esteem of self, expressing itself variously, according to the different dispositions of men: sometimes it will be felt in the excessive admiration of some bodily excellence, such as beauty, symmetry, strength: sometimes it will exist upon the ground of mental

excellency, such as judgment, talent, wit. At other times, it takes up its abode in the conceit of certain tempers and dispositions, which the proud man considers peculiarly his, and which, in his opinion, are most praiseworthy and excellent. In other instances, its strong hold is in the works, the righteousness, and self-denial, which it is imagined the soul abundantly possesses. Thus far it is similar to self-confidence, being the root or parent principle of that corruption, with which it acts in concert, each contributing their corrupt streams to the other, and administering to the increase of both evils. A man is proud, he is consequently confident in his own possessions; he is confident, and as the result he complacently rests in his high-mindedness, and sees no cause for distrust or apprehension. We shall of course perceive a similarity in the visible effects of these abominations; yet there is a sufficient shade of difference, and some important considerations attendant upon this difference, sufficing to afford us a distinct subject for our inquiry.

The pride of a natural heart is also exceeding extensive in its operations: it not only sheds its baneful life through *personal* distinctions, but it takes occasions to live by the *circumstantials* of a man's condition in this world. In innumerable instances, it prevails in a high satisfaction derived from the extent of riches, honours, titles, high birth, and great connexions, and these become

the subject of unspeakable self-gratulation. And so varied is the power of this sin, that, changing its direction, and taking up its abode in a *poor* man, it lives in the same unquestionable prevalence, filling him with an envious resentment against his richer neighbour, and making his poverty the subject of proud controversy and rebellion against the providence and government of God.

In subjects that are more particularly of a religious character, pride will exist, leading a man to consider himself better than he really is; as to his powers of soul, he thinks he has sufficient energy wherewith to direct his own steps, that when he condescends to turn his thoughts upon God's requirements and the duty of man, his own reason shall prove an efficient guide; and that revelation, although a subordinate help, is not to him what the more ignorant require. Or, if he professes the religion of Christ, he is ready to congratulate himself upon the consistency with which he follows the rule he has laid down for himself; his own conduct, his own principles, his knowledge, his gifts, are all subjects of enjoyment to him, as tributary to his own honour; and the very religion of Jesus is made subservient to feed his pride, and foster vain expectations from self.

We cannot be accustomed to observe human life, or to investigate the spirit of professing

Christians, without admitting that this statement is certainly true. We discover the fact by the *evidences* which so awfully abound; and since this is the legitimate method by which to draw our conclusions respecting the inward state of man, we may profitably dwell upon the subject, with an endeavour to determine what are the fruits which severally appear in the instances adduced, and how we may be enabled to detect pride in ourselves or others; and to exhibit its loathsome nature, that it may become the object of our abhorrence, and the subject of our Christian discipline.

The pride which lives in the estimation of bodily distinctions, will be evidenced by an eager desire to attract attention, and to force the tribute of admiration. This is done by a studied adornment of the body; or, where there is greater confidence of attraction, by an affected carelessness, it being supposed that there is native charm sufficient to surprise and fix the beholder's eye; this vanity is directed by the hope of ensuring that the palm of beauty, of grace, or of power of attraction, shall be given, where pride suggests that it is supremely due; and, if disappointed in this expectation, the mortification experienced in the heart is presently alleviated, by *pity* for the ill-judging multitude, or contempt for the cold-hearted beholder. This pride may also be discovered, in the evident satisfaction that is felt when the

lip of adulation addresses the words of flattery to the ear, and in the eagerness with which this strain is received as music to the soul.

There are those who despising such a propensity, pride themselves upon their higher range in intellectual delights: with these *mind* is the great idol, and the hope of *seeming* at least to rank with such as are eminent in this possession, fills the heart with burning ambition. Much as they profess to despise the contemptible pride of the vain and empty, they are nevertheless betrayed by their pride into the very same *evidence* of the corruption; the only difference being, that the particular *subject* of self-complacency varies. We equally discover in the man who is proud of his judgment, talent, and wit, that he is intent upon forcing some tribute from his surrounding friends, or from the world at large: he loves *display*, and is intoxicated by the draught that is presented to him, when, by his quick repartee, his force of argument, his witty sarcasms, his discussion of other men's doctrines or opinions, or his tide of eloquence, he carries the passions of men along with him, and sees himself crowned and acknowledged *great* in their eyes. Or, if he fails in his attempts to astonish or convince his associates, he possesses the same ready ability of retreating within the strong hold of self-complacency, and of ascribing his failure to the want of discernment in other men.

There is an awful evidence of pride in some men, who are ready to boast themselves of a power of *body*, in which they seem to imagine they may bid defiance to any foe, and dare even the Almighty God. How many are there, who, in this pride, foster a contentious and bloody mind, delighting in opportunities for displaying their prowess, although it be to the destruction and death of another! Wholly absorbed in the one desire of attaining a name, and of being famous in the annals of those who are strong in battle, they admit no other consideration, and bow to no superior strength. Whilst other men have a horrible propensity to pride themselves in the strength of their constitution, and presuming they have a warrant herein to indulge in intemperance and fleshly lusts, they give themselves up to unbridled passions, and glory in their shame.

When the pride of the heart is felt upon the supposed excellency of *temper* or *disposition*, it will be betrayed by frequent discussion of that particular tendency which is the point of admiration. If it is for high sentiments of what is called *honour* or *self-respect*, it will be manifested by endeavour to exalt the disposition to revenge, or the spirit that is *above* making concession, &c. Such a man will expatiate at large, upon the noble spirit that can resent an injury, or that will not brook an affront; and his own conduct corresponds with his senti-

ments: he *wishes* you to think that *he* is the man whom he thus elevates, and he proves that he is when occasion is presented. In the pride of his heart, he haughtily refuses to accept overtures from one who has offended him; or he is equally immoveable when the demands of peace would require concession from himself: he is too proud to suppose himself in error, he is too proud to forgive an error in another; and with a deep-seated resolve he retains his own high spirit, incapable of stooping to terms of reconciliation. Sometimes this resolve is evidenced in words and deeds of malice, and anger and revenge; at other times in sullen reserve and distance. And it is an awful truth, that it can lurk also under the plausible exterior of peace, for a man may be too proud to allow his adversary to suppose he can trouble him, and may scorn the idea of seeming accessible to what such a contemned creature might inflict upon the mind. This species of pride is carried very far with some persons, they admire a disposition more calm and equal in its feeling: the urbanity or sweetness of a temper that preserves its own equality, and that overcomes evil with good, is that for which they desire to be eminent: hence they guard the outward expression of the eye, the manners, and the tongue, seeking to exalt themselves in the opinion of others for the sweetness of their unruffled disposition, and evidently gratified in proportion to the *character*

for *good temper* which they obtain with men. This is betrayed by frequent assertions that they have no resentments, that they can live at peace with any man, and that they can defy provocations, remaining immoveable in their own superiority to these things.

There is another form which pride assumes in the common concerns of life. It will not unfrequently occur, that disputations arise amongst those who are associated; some offence has been committed, or it is suspected that some one has trespassed; charges are brought against the offender, and altercation ensues: on one side, a proud determination to criminate the person moves to multiplied reproaches—on the other, an equal determination to justify self leads to loud expressions of anger, and to unjustifiable methods for self-vindication. Should any one interfere, the tide of indignation is turned immediately upon him, and a scene of tumult and contention proclaims aloud the domineering spirit of pride by which the parties are agitated. On occasions when less violence is evinced, equal pride may exist. Many are impatient of contradiction, many are irritated at reproof, many are disdainful, and refuse investigation of their conduct, and, even when secretly conscious that they have either knowingly or inadvertently put a stumbling-block in a brother's way, are too proud to stoop down and remove it, even though its continuance should

be instrumental to misery and sin: the pride of their heart makes them resolved not to appear to have been in the wrong; and having done the deed, or spoken the word, they cannot humble themselves to retract.

When we seek for the evidence of pride in those whose prevailing taste leads to complacency in worldly greatness, we shall discover it in many unquestionable forms. These persons are disposed to *talk* much of their rich relations, whilst they hope it will not be suspected that they have *poor* ones: not that they are on all occasions negligent of the poor;—they have no disinclination to pay that part of society some attention, when it can really seem an act of *condescension*. To enter into a poor cottage, to speak to a poor person, and to converse upon the miseries of the poor, may be the pathway to personal exaltation, by giving occasion to *display humility*, to seem very courteous, and to be extolled for charity. This can be done with the conceit of individual superiority: but when the poor person is a *relative*, it seems to reduce to an equality, which the proud mind abhors and involuntarily starts from. And so common is this description of pride, that there are innumerable instances where money, influence, and exertion are incessantly given for a poor *stranger*, whilst poor relations are left to starve and suffer beggary, only because they

are relations. To such persons it is unutterably gratifying to be introduced into a high circle, and to be able to speak of titled persons, or persons eminent for any popular talent, as if they were their particular friends; they fancy that this fellowship shall impart to them somewhat of their possessions, and that individual greatness is secured by the greatness of their connexions. On occasions where this disposition meets gratification, there will be an anxiety to preserve the influence which they imagine is thus obtained, leading to mean and servile attempts to please, for the sake of some token of notice in public, or that prospects of worldly advancement may open with more brilliant promises through these advantages. How frequently may we see these slaves to the sin of pride in fact debasing themselves below the meanest of those whom they despise: how often will they act inconsistently with themselves, evincing apparent contrarieties in their character of a surprising kind, just as the impulse is given, at the moment, by that description of pride which may be thus called into action.

The pride of the heart may be betrayed upon this subject by an inordinate esteem of *appearances;* so that many will, through this passion, labour to wear the garb, and affect the style and establishment, which their pecuniary condition will not justly support: they cannot endure to be exceeded by their neighbours and

acquaintance in the pomp, and elegance, and convenience of their equipage and household; and they will vie with them in these things, although at the expense of many secret privations, and of the misery and burden of contracted debts, involving themselves and their family in wretchedness and ruin, for the transitory satisfaction of being thought as rich and great as another man.

There are also those who put very little estimation upon the distinctions attained through external pomp and show. They are poor, and they heed not their poverty; they congratulate themselves that they rank by *birth* and *blood* with men of highest renown, and that they can trace a genealogy more ancient, or equal to any noble of the earth. In this spirit they consider themselves on a level with the greatest men, and proudly despise the arrogant pretensions of such as have amassed their wealth by industry, or attained their honours by some unexpected incident or favour. The pride of their heart is visible in their haughty and high look, and is expressed in language that boasts of what they term an imperishable greatness.

The pride of a poor man, upon the circumstantials of life, may be equal in degree, although differently evidenced. Were he placed in the condition of his rich neighbour, he would display the same fruit. This he proves by the discontent of his mind, which betrays that he

puts a very high value upon the station, &c. which God's providence denies him. He demonstrates his pride by murmuring words, by insubordinate language and deportment, and by ingratitude for the blessings of God's provision for him and his, and for the kindnesses received from men.

Are there not persons also in all ranks of life, who not only *have* the sin of pride, but who are proud of their pride: who contemplate the sin, dressed up in the garb which their own ignorant minds have prepared, and fall in love with the hideous monster; calling it by fine names of their own invention, and styling it *proper* pride, or dignity of character, or noble principle, or excellent spirit, or a great mind; delighting in themselves in proportion as they discover the workings of this passion, and hugging their curse to their bosom, as the darling of their soul, not choosing to remember, that "God *abhorreth* the proud?"

Wherever we detect these features, we may substantiate the charge: such a man is proud: and whether we discover the testimony in ourselves, or in others, we should form a just judgment, and may, by the word of God, ascertain the awful and affecting truth. But, alas! this evil is not confined, as we have seen, to things which relate only to this life: even upon subjects that professedly refer to the life which is to come, the pride of nature is fearfully con-

spicuous, and the fruits are equally discernible. When a sinner presumes that he has any thing of native righteousness and wisdom, he will evince the error of his vain mind, by scorning the aid which others of a more lowly spirit estimate: we shall find him talking high of his wisdom, and we shall see him negligent of the means of grace, and indifferent to the contents of the blessed word of God: or, we shall hear him loud in his proclamation of his own discoveries and attainments, whilst he lightly esteems such as, in his judgment, have made less progress than himself. He is destitute of self-knowledge, and he is consequently without dependance, and without charity: this he habitually betrays, by the lightness, or vanity, or censoriousness of his conversation, and by his contempt of all opinions which differ from his own, and of all such testimonies as tend to lay him low. He carries his self-justifying spirit even into his dealings with God, stands up against the charges of the law, vindicates himself upon the requirements of the Gospel, resents the ministerial warnings which tell him of his need, altercates with the children of God, and is impatient of their faithful counsels, and sets up a standard of his own, to which he would render God himself amenable.

What a monstrous corruption is the pride of nature! O how awful in all its bearings, and how wholly destructive to the souls of men!

And let believers remember, that, by this defiling and baneful production of an evil heart, even the regenerate are sometimes overtaken, and seriously injured in their experience. We must not conclude, that a man is no sooner born again of the Spirit, but he ceases to be troubled by the contentions of the flesh. Alas! his life is a scene of conflict, and he has still to feel and own that the workings of an evil nature are his burden on the way. In all the instances adduced in the above statement, a child of God may be tempted, and, if he is not upon his guard, he may be overcome. Christians must therefore watch their hearts, and be jealous of the inward movements, by which they might be betrayed into the sin of vanity, or of wicked display of talent, for selfish ends; or of independance and forgetfulness of the uncertainty of life; or of empty gratification from the fading honours of this world; or of contempt of the poor; or of discontent with their own lot; or, lest the temper should be a source of temptation, and anger and altercation disgrace the Christian name; lest in religious profession the subtle leaven of self-dependence, or of complacency in gifts, &c. should dishonour the work of the Spirit, and rise up in rivalry against the Lord. Our daily experience will prove to us, that these are snares against which we have reason to watch and pray, and yet more affecting is the recollection, that Pride can take

occasion to blend itself, even in the peculiar exercises of the true life of faith, and in those interests which are pre-eminently the privilege of the faithful. This, for instance, is the case, when, upon any occasion, the child of God is tempted to consider the cross too heavy, or the burden laid upon him as too grievous to be borne. Impatience always proceeds from pride; for were we sensible of our own desert, we should not conceive any trial more than we deserve; and were we conscious of our own infirmity, we should not imagine any affliction unneeded; or, did we bear in mind our own ignorance, we should not suppose, that we could dictate a better mode for our sanctification and experience, than that which is adopted by our Lord. Whenever we feel disposed to listen to this temptation, let us therefore instantly remember this is a feature of pride, and labour to have it reduced before God. The same evil exists, when we are inclined to complain of spiritual desertion, or of that proportion of spiritual discernment, usefulness, &c. which may have been appointed to us. Why do we find fault with our God for our want of consolation? we are not straitened in him, and were there not some cause in ourselves, we should not be destitute of joy; either we have grieved the spirit, or we require this dispensation in order to refine us and keep us from evil: were we not proud, we should search out the cause, and sacrifice the murmuring mind, wait-

ing patiently upon the mercy of the covenant of our God. Sometimes we fall into a trespass, by refusing to take the bare promise of the Lord: we will not take Him at his word, we look for signs and tokens, and expect that He shall stoop to our perverse desire; and if He does not comply, we are ready to admit the false reasonings of nature, and fall into a spirit of unbelief. And how shall we account for that disposition, which makes us sometimes inordinately cast down by the persecutions, revilings, ingratitude, and falsehood of men? why are we displeased when we are not appreciated by the creature? and wherefore do the emotions of grief, and discomposure, enter upon the heart? Surely here is somewhat of pride; and although we may be enabled to put a bridle upon the tongue, so that the grief is not resisted by visible violence, yet the excess of the trouble argues that there is a degree of resistance in the state of the mind, and this can only arise out of pride. By such experience, we obtain increase of cause for personal humiliation, the demonstration becoming undeniable, that in us, "that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" and the evidence being clear, that amongst other abominations attendant upon our fall from God, *pride* is become the inmate of the heart.

We should use every effort towards its destruction, stir up the soul to act with decision upon this important subject, and adopt such

measures for the promotion of a better state of mind, as may be acknowledged by the Lord. We shall find amongst other means to this end, that it will be serviceable, frequently to call to mind the vileness of our own original, that we are descended from a fallen parent, that our nature is under the curse, and that we have inherited that abominable spirit of alienation from God, which is expressed in enmity to Him, and in the breach of all his commands. We should frequently look into the actual offences which we have committed, and examine their extent, and consider their awful desert, by the voice of God's word. Many times we should call to mind our many obligations to the Lord's forbearance, forgiveness, bounty, or grace, and see how his compassions are numberless, and have been bestowed where unworthiness and sin prevailed. Nor should we be satisfied with thoughts upon *God's* mercies: we have received many benefits from men, and are debtors to their charity, or good will, or assistance in various ways, carrying about with us each day the demonstration of our dependance in some measure upon these. And as believers, we should constantly bear in our thoughts the consideration of what is due as Christians to the cause which we profess. Pride is *inconsistent*, it dishonours our profession, and is offensive to God, and baneful in its influences upon those who have a right to expect, that the followers of Jesus

should be of the same mind as their Lord. And to ourselves it will always be found exceedingly injurious, leading to the commission of such things as defile the soul, and paving the way for rebuke from God, and for distress in our own experience, for "a haughty spirit goes before a *fall*."

Let us, in the conclusion of this subject, humble ourselves before the Lord, in the consciousness of our own participation in the evil described, and come to that cross of our dear Redeemer where pardon is dispensed: here we may prostrate our souls, and from Him we shall receive peace: and may He give it, with the destruction of our pride, and through the application of that great salvation, which not only delivers from condemnation, but invests with the spirit of holiness.

Let us prove from the Scriptures that pride is a sin proceeding from the heart of man.

"For from within, out of the heart of men proceed—*Pride*. Mar. vii. 21, 22.

Can it be proved that it consists of an inordinate self-esteem?

"Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." Rev. iii. 17.

Can we produce examples, or testimonies, of

its existence in a conceit of personal excellencies?

"The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go." Isa. iii. 16. See also Dan. iv. 30.

Is it to be proved from Scripture, that the circumstantials of a man's *condition* in this world will give it action?

"I will say to my soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease." Luke xii. 19. See also Isa. xxxix. 1—6.

"Then answered them the Pharisees, are ye also deceived? Have any of the *Rulers* or of the *Pharisees* believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." John vii. 47—49.

"But chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lusts of uncleanness, and despise government: presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." 2 Pet. ii. 10.

"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." Jude 16.

How can we prove that it is a sin which exists in the midst of professed attention to religious topics?

"For the time will come when they will not

endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers." 2 Tim. iv. 3. See also Acts xviii. 17. Rom. x. 21. 1 Cor. i. 11. 1 Tim. vi. 3—5. 2 Kings x. 16. 3 John 9.

Is there any record proving that it may be betrayed by the regenerate?

"And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." Acts xv. 39.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." Jer. xlv. 3—5. See also Jonah iv. 9. Job. vi. 8—10.

What will be the judgment of God upon the proud?

"For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low." Isa. ii. 12. See also Mal. iv. 1. 1 Pet. v. 5.

HUMILITY.

HUMILITY stands directly opposed to the pride, which formed the subject of the preceding pages, and may be described as a disposition to self-emptiness. It is not to be considered a fruit of man's nature, for it is altogether contrary to the whole tendency of unregenerate affections and desires, and never does exist in its true character, but as a grace of the Spirit, introduced into the soul by God's new creating power. It is to be acknowledged, that there are some dispositions naturally more tractable than others, and tempers of a naturally amiable cast, through which the possessor becomes proportionably candid, obliging or affectionate. In domestic life, or in the transactions which necessarily engage men in intercourse, these dispositions are exceedingly valuable, and usually they receive a warm tribute from those who live under their mild and benignant influence; but this is not the *Christian grace of humility;* and it will, upon examination, be found that it will bear no comparison with the precious fruit produced by the Holy Ghost. It is, like every

natural feeling, limited and partial in its operations, not extending beyond the narrow circle of *present* interests, or of human ties; and even in this range exhibiting great inequality, and a capability to be almost wholly depressed, or exhausted, by circumstances of time. Christian humility, on the contrary, extends its sacred operations to the whole man, sheds its precious influence through every undertaking, maintains a holy impartiality and equality, and reaches to all interests of time and eternity; nor is it depressed, or exhausted, by any evils that arise and threaten its life; trial serves but to purify its nature, and experience to deepen its spiritual energy.

We may trace the life of this grace, through all the situations wherein *pride* naturally abounds; it will triumph in the condition of the believer personally, circumstantially, and spiritually.

Personally, by leading to a sound judgment respecting the distinctions of body or mind, with which the Lord is pleased to visit His creatures, according to his own sovereign will. Thus it is by some persons scarcely known to themselves, that they possess any greater proportion of personal beauty than others; an unconsciousness of the attractions that attend them, keeps their imaginations and expectations under holy moderation; and they do not consider themselves entitled to any attention on

this ground, neither do they covet them; it is sufficient for them that they are created according to the Lord's divine will; and although they may occasionally receive demonstration of human admiration, these pass from the thought as occurrences of small importance. The same disposition will render the mind equally content, when, so far from beauty, deformity is the lot appointed; humility takes what God has ordained without complaint, and so far from being envious of the possessions of another, rejoices in the exhibition of God's power, when presented in the exquisite production of symmetry or beauty in the creature. But it may be that the possession of these distinctions is not to be denied, or unobserved; here, however, humility will retain its dominion, and teach the salutary lesson of the uncertainty of these dying adornments; it will be remembered also, that the fairest form is but a transitory flower, that blooms awhile, and is cut down like the grass of the field, and that it has not power to resist the inroads and ravages of sickness, or the darkness and corruption of the tomb. In the same spirit, humility pervades the judgment, when distinction for wit, talent, and mental excellence is vouchsafed; these are received with gratitude, they are held dependently, and a lowly spirit is preserved, by the recollection that a fever, a stroke, or the advance of years may deprive the mind of all its present elevation, and leave the

possessor a monument of man's weakness, and of the uncertainty of all present distinctions. The particular *temper* which may belong to him, is also no subject of pride, or self-complacency; he knows that there is nothing estimable with God, in the high disposition that resents, avenges, and pleads for itself; and if such is his natural propensity, it is considered cause for humiliation, and great watchfulness. If, on the contrary, his temper is compliant and sweet, he is sensible that it has its attendant dangers, and that unless sanctified it would lead it into many inconsistencies, and might expose the soul to the most sinful compliances with the world, or to want of zeal and faithfulness with souls; on this ground, therefore, he feels no cause for self-exaltation, but rather brings his natural temper perpetually to the mercy-seat, that it may receive the atonement, and be hallowed to true and genuine exercises by the Holy Ghost.

We may examine Christian humility, in its prevalence through the *circumstantials* of life, with full demonstration that it is peculiar and excellent in its character. It leaves a man nothing whereof to boast, and nothing whereof to complain. If riches, and honors, and titles, are the lot, these are looked upon as *gifts* from God's providential government; if possessed by *inheritance*, there is no credit due to *self* on this account; if obtained through exertion, "it is God who giveth man strength to get wealth,"

vanity, which have formerly deceived him; and brought to the spirit of humility, he now believes that salvation is the gift of God, and the effect of a covenant of grace, infinite and sovereign in all its purposes. His own reason is renounced, and become a broken idol that lays at the foot of the cross; he knows its imbecility in things that are spiritual, and looks to the divine teaching which alone can illuminate, and lead to life. In the religious profession which he makes, he has a just sense of the measure of God's mercy to him; he confesses, and he appreciates, the gifts bestowed upon him; it does not appear to him a due expression of humility, when a man *denies* the liberality of God in this respect, but that real self-emptiness will lead to a persuasion of God's bounty, when it becomes evident that somewhat is possessed by which he is made serviceable in the cause of truth; in lowliness of heart, therefore, he ascribes the glory to God, for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and he adds this debt to his many other mercies, whereby to increase his gratitude and zeal. At the same time, humility preserves a constant sense of the personal infirmity, and of the many short comings, which attend his labor and his experience, so that a prostration of spirit is increasingly felt within, and the wonder of the grace of the covenant rises higher and higher in his sight.

Thus humility prevails, as a Christian grace,

in the dispositions of a regenerate man, and will impregnate the whole experience, demonstrating the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, who inhabits the bosom of the true believer, and powerfully subdues the evil principles of nature, especially, striking omnipotently at the root of pride, and making a man to feel that he is nothing in himself, and that he is no longer consistent with his condition as a fallen creature, when he vaunts himself as possessed either of natural or spiritual independence.

There are certain *manifestations* of this excellent grace which render the life of the believer fruitful in every good word and work, glorifying the name of the Lord, and blessing the society where he lives. To these evidences we now turn our inquiry, in order to excite the soul to make investigation of its own state, and to afford the humble the consolation which is derived from a witness of God's love, and power, thus displayed in their behalf. It will necessarily follow, that where this grace is in any lively existence, there will be a *visible* influence which all men may read, and ought to understand. In outward deportment there will be a modest and unaffected simplicity, which rather shrinks from observation than courts it: such a person is content to be overlooked, or, if observed, to be treated in common with the rest of the company; words of flattery or adulation

will be distasteful; even the commendation which men of judgment may give, is accepted with hesitation, lest there should be some partiality or mistake in the conclusions they have drawn; and such occasions will lead the mind into self-inquiry, and, so far from elating, cause the manifestation of deeper humility. In reference to the exterior, it will be attended with modesty in dress, and an attention to such a style as is becoming a retired and lowly mind, and corresponds with the station which they desire to fill to the glory of God, and as "not of this world:" and if it is in reference to the mental state, it will be displayed by a modest proposal of opinion, by a consciousness of the possibility of being himself in error, by a candid acceptance of the arguments of other men, giving them unprejudiced investigation, and, when led to retain his own judgment in preference to that proposed by his opponent, willing to admit that he may have strong reasons for his own particular view, and is not to be contemned at once, as if wholly inferior to himself in discernment and power of mind.

When humility is demonstrated in *temper*, it will produce meekness and gentleness under contradictions: arguments will be conducted without heat; or, when peace is endangered, the subject will be dropped, even although it may seem to argue a relinquishment of the prize of victory: such a man does not argue for

individual triumph, but for the establishment of truth, and therefore he is ready to "leave off contention before it be meddled with:" he will make concessions, or receive them, with unfeigned desire for harmony; and whenever he may do so consistently with his faith, he rejoices to demonstrate that the loftiness of nature is bowed down. When advice is proposed from some friendly voice, it is received with gratitude, the motive is appreciated, and the purport is attended to with candour and alacrity: on some occasions it may be accompanied with reproof, but this will not offend; if it is unmerited, the spirit makes allowances for the prejudice or mistake that has occasioned it; if it arose from enmity, the heart is prepared to accept it as from the Lord, and to bless when others curse; and if it has been called for by any offence, or inconsistency, humility immediately disposes to an inquiry into the cause, and an honest desire to remove the stumbling-block out of the way. This will be evinced by kind, gentle, and grateful diligence to restore the comfort that may have been interrupted by the offence, and to make every exertion for the preservation of relative peace, and of the honour of the cause of Christ.

In the *circumstantials* of life humility will be very conspicuous: the rich will be courteous to the poorest man, not as an act of condescen-

sion, but really and honestly in *respect* to the poor man, as the creature of God equally with himself, and as respectable in proportion as he discharges his responsibilities in life. This courtesy will be manifested in all companies, and under all circumstances; not only when unseen by the higher acquaintances with whom he associates—not only when under some personal necessity to receive a kindness from the poor, but *always*, from the genuine principle of Christianity, and in obedience to the law of equity and justice. The mind of such a man will be delivered from the bondage of the pride of nature, and will not suggest that *greatness* is acquired by displaying the extent of high connexions, &c. which may be formed; these things are literally of small importance to him, and therefore his conversation will not savour of this folly; he has been taught to estimate things and persons by a true standard, and, acting by this rule, he attains to real spiritual dignity.

The humble *poor* man has an equal power of glorifying God, by the manifestation of this precious grace: his cheerful contentment, his civility and courtesy to the rich, his gratitude for kindnesses received, his diligence in the discharge of his duties, his submission to the powers that be, are all lovely fruits of humility, and adorn his profession as a Christian, showing forth the praises of Him who has anointed him

with this spirit of his heavenly Master, and investing him with inward enjoyments, that are lasting and peculiar.

The course of the humble, in the walks that lead to religious profession, is in accordance with this holy influence. We follow the lowly believer into the means and ordinances of grace, where he diligently labours to gather food for his soul: he believes that the Lord has ordained these as pastures wherein He will feed his sheep; and he patiently waits in them, being grateful for the provision, and willing to receive the blessing, by any instrument whom God shall appoint. Whilst he exercises a discriminating taste, so as to discern what is wholesome food, he guards against a cavilling and disputatious spirit; and, for the continual visitations of the Lord, lifts up a tribute of praise, whilst, for moments of depression and hunger, he calls *himself* to account, and lies low before God. His dependence is on the Holy Ghost,—he proves it by his use of the means He has appointed; and in the midst of his own exercises he glorifies the name of the Lord, evermore proclaiming "*He* is faithful." This humble spirit prepares him also to be a comfort and stay to other souls· he compassionates the needy, he can bear with the perverse, he labours to lift up the fallen, and is open to receive the communications of the tempted and afflicted, patiently enduring all things, and restoring his

brother, considering himself lest he also should be tempted. Thus, a humble soul is a sympathetic soul, and is consequently a blessing to his fellow-sinners and companions in the faith, administering from time to time the cordials of the gospel, and treading in the steps of Him who humbled himself even unto death, that He might bring sinners to God.

Powerfully indeed will this disposition prepare the believer for those more private exercises to which he is liable: in a humble mind, he bows to the Divine will, whatever it may be: when God is pleased thus to dispense tribulation to his soul, He yields to the blast, or bends to the storm: it is not for him to *choose* his cross, nor does he desire it—this he leaves with his infinitely wise and gracious Friend; and when He has selected it for him, he consents that it is good, and will bear it without complaint: he gives evidence of this by the patience of his deportment and speech; from his lips no words are heard that express rebellion against the Divine decree; the language of his heart and of his tongue will be, "the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Should it be that he is tried by calumny and evil report, or, should he be deserted, vilified, and oppressed, he humbly accepts the tribulation; he believes that there is some *cause*—either he requires purification or chastisement; and since these things are instru-

ments in God's hand, his only anxiety is to be able to know the *voice* of the rod, and to meet the will of God in the dispensation. Divine rebukes are painful; nevertheless, they are a *Father's* correction, and humility will mingle thanksgiving with affliction, whilst suffering under the reproof; and he, who knows it is designed for the furtherance of holiness in his soul, will meekly kiss the hand that inflicts the blow.

The excellency of this grace is exceedingly commended to us, when we view it in these extensive bearings; let us not be contented with a barren tribute of admiration, but direct our attention to the culture of the plant in our own hearts. We have to bear in mind, that it is an effect of the Lord's regenerating Spirit, but that it is greatly increased through the means of diligence; and whilst we earnestly pray for the impartation from on High, we must combine the honest effort of spiritual industry, in seeking the vigour of its true character. This will be promoted by continual self-observation and self-examination; we shall find that there is a sufficiently humiliating evidence of our own sin and weakness, in the retrospect of every day, to hide pride from the soul; and that we are called upon to make confession of our unworthiness, and to lament our infirmity from day to day. This is not designed to discourage us, neither

will *true* humility lead to despondency, for the knowledge of native depravity will destroy proud expectations, and prepare the way for the habitual persuasion that there can be nothing good in the soul of a sinner, but by the sovereign grace of the Lord; this generates hope, and makes the poorest put in his claim, seeing that riches come only from the Lord. One of the greatest excitements to the cultivation of this disposition is derived from believing fellowship with Christ, particularly setting before the mind His wonderful humility. He has commended His own example to us, as the pattern by which we are to conform ourselves to the Gospel, and teaches His followers that they must walk in His steps, who stooped to the most dependant suffering and afflicted life, that He might bring us to Him who triumphed in the meek surrender of His own comforts, that He might raise the beggar from his ruin, and invest the miserable with peace! Many are the advantages which arise from this possession: it is highly esteemed by the Lord, He dwells with the humble, He makes His habitation in the lowly and contrite heart; to this man he turns His complacent regard, and has promised that He will "have mercy on the humble." Thus it is attended with delightful experience here below, and shall meet an attendant acknowledgment in the world above; for the Lord has annexed promises of the most precious kind to

this disposition, and stands engaged to give unspeakable mercies to such as are lowly in their own eyes, and evince humility in their spirit. If we value spiritual enrichment, let us then cherish this spirit, and remember how peculiarly it acts as a protection to the pilgrim, and is the means of preserving from innumerable evils which overtake and destroy the proud man. We must, however, in the conclusion of this subject, feel persuaded that we are guilty of a breach in this spirit. We cannot look back upon the steps we have trod, without being aware that humility has been a stranger to the breast: we have trespassed in all the instances laid down, and we must perish for our sin, were there not an atonement in Christ, which pleads with an all-prevailing voice. To the blood of sprinkling we must come for the remission of sin on this affecting subject, and in the shelter of Jesu's cross we must endeavour to take refuge, against the infliction of the sentence which our sins deserve: here, and here only, the weary can find rest, or the wicked be subdued; and to this blessed provision we should press all who hear us, seeking also to manifest our own strong conviction, that the blood and righteousness of Christ are the only way of salvation, and that we need the demonstration of this love to our own souls, in order to preserve us *truly humble*, and able to appreciate the life of faith. Thus let us meditate, and pray, and

seek confirmation upon the several heads, by the sacred voice of the Scriptures.

Prove that humility is a divine grace.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind." Col. iii. 12. See also Phil. iii. 3.

Prove that it renders man modest, unobtrusive, and teachable, under any personal distinctions, either of body or mind.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2. See also 1 Cor. iv. 7. Isa. xl. 6, 7. 2 Sam. xviii. 23.

Show that it renders a man patient in contradiction, ready to forgive, and make concessions or accept them.

"All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." 1 Pet. v. 5.

"Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Acts xxiii. 5. See also Phil. ii. 3. Eph. iv. 2, 3.

Prove that humility delivers a man from

bondage to the circumstantials of life, and also causes the rich to respect the poor.

"Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" 2 Sam vii. 18.

"I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched it out." Job xxix. 16. See also Luke xiv. 13.

And filling the poor with submission, content, &c.

"Render therefore to all their dues." Rom. xiii. 7. See also 1 Kings xviii. 46.

Prove that in spiritual interests it leads to self-emptiness and dependence.

"For it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil ii. 13. See also Rom. vii. 14. 1 Cor. i. 20, 21.

Prove that it fills with zeal and relative sympathy.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Gal. vi. 1—3.

Prove that it meekly bears the cross, without repining at its weight.

"Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts v. 41.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21. See 2 Kings iv. 26.

Prove that it is attended with blessings.

"For thus saith the High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isa. lvii. 15. See also Psalm x. 17. Matt. xviii. 4.

HYPOCRISY.

THE sin of Hypocrisy now demands our inquiry: it is an awful but interesting subject, testifying of the misery of blinded and hardened nature, and affording an affecting lesson, both to the sinner and the saint. The word is derived from the Greek, and signifies a stage-player, which sufficiently indicates the character it is intended to describe: it presents the idea of one who assumes a character which does not really belong to him, and which he wishes aptly to to represent so as to impose upon beholders; and in proportion to his success herein, is the *hypocrite's excellency*.

There are many ways in which this disposition prevails in the things of this life, that do not particularly belong to religious profession; but on the present occasion, we are confined to the view of things which have a direct bearing upon the concerns of the soul; and to this branch of the subject we must direct our attention, remembering however that they generally go together, for he who is a hypocrite with God, cannot be

supposed to be a sincere man with his fellow men.

But what is the character which the religious hypocrite designs to represent? He wishes to appear a saint of God, or one who *would* be so: that is, he would desire that others should conceive of him as a man sincerely in the pursuit of religion, and that the Lord also, making allowances for his evident want of conformity to such a state, would believe him sincere in professing subjection to his will. This condition has different degrees in different persons, and may take a more visible direction, towards men or towards God, according to the disposition, views, or circumstances, by which the offender may be induced to act; and we should endeavour to understand this difference, in order that we may be assisted in giving the word of counsel, or in taking the word of reproof. A hypocrite may give his chief attention to the character he is to maintain in the world, only, or principally, desiring to stand well with such as know him, or with whom he may be in the habits of association: or he may direct his expectation of imposing even to God himself, earnestly seeking to persuade the Almighty to judge more favourably of him than his case admits: or he may practise deception upon his own mind, seeking to impose upon his judgment, and bribe his conscience to bear witness in favour of his state: or he may

combine the whole, and be a hypocrite in all its bearings and extent.

According to the particular direction which is given to this depraved desire, will be the demonstration of his character; he will act correspondently, and assume such a line of conduct as promises most success to his imposition. When directed towards men, inward insincerity is covered by a mask of apparent zeal, and earnestness, in the cause of truth; and the hypocrite is generally forward in every thing which may give him the character of sanctity, so long as it leaves his bosom sins unmolested. He will be exceeding diligent in the external forms, conforming his practice to the rules of the church to which he belongs, and regularly attending all those means which are established for the nourishment of souls. His seat is seldom empty, he is seen in public ordinances and in private meetings, and every stated occasion in which Christians assemble is deemed important in his pursuit. He knows that regularity in these institutions is one of the marks of true profession, and he is solicitous to be found faithful in this obligation. He will feel and express an earnest desire to make proselytes; he cares not for conversion of souls, but he wishes to increase his own party, and to be famous in profession, as having induced others to join the society: by this appearance of zeal he hopes to persuade men that he is uprightly bent upon the advance of Christ's king-

dom, and that this shall prove a cloke to his defects in other particulars: in consequence, he is forward to dispute, and argue, and persuade, descanting upon the necessity of making a religious profession, and extolling his own party as pre-eminently excellent, and most to be admired. He obtains a degree of knowledge, through his natural ability, or his frequent hearing, and this knowledge he is glad to display: he will talk of the Scriptures, of the tenets held by professing Christians, and of what he deems to be truth, labouring to convince his hearers that he has wisdom, and that by spiritual discernment he is distinguished and high among the saints. He is prone to expatiate upon the inconsistency which he beholds in others, scrutinizes their conduct, sifts their motives of action, ascribes false motives to them, is loud in exclaiming against the smallest deviation from the rule, makes a man an offender for a word, and hopes by directing the observation of men to others, to divert it from himself, or, at least, to lead them to the conclusion, that it is impossible he should be guilty in those things which he so boldly condemns in another. He has much to say upon the guilt of persecutors, talks of the history of past ages in which believers have been cast out, and oppressed, with expressions of awe at the crimes of the persecutors, and professes to consider all such dispositions abominable and provoking to the Lord. But this is

not all; he has too much observation upon the course of true believers to suppose that he shall succeed in his imposition, if he has nothing more solid to show than mere words and professions, and therefore he puts himself upon some works which may appear unto men fruits of genuine faith. He will subscribe to the institutions by which Christianity is promoted, he will occasionally give a contribution of bodily exertion in the cause, he will establish family worship, and fast and pray, and set apart seasons for retirement, counting these sacrifices well provided, if only they may prevail to enroll his name amongst the servants of God, with those who really love the divine service.

When hypocrisy is directed towards God, the secret insincerity of the heart is covered by a high profession of homage: here the Hypocrite labours to combine with his outward forms the inward excitement of his passions. He wishes to be able with warm feelings to cry Lord! Lord! and to multiply his addresses, as one who admires the divine glory and adores the eternal majesty. He is also full of professed love of God's will: words cost him nothing, therefore he is frequent in saying, "Thy will be done." Whilst he contemplates that will abstractedly, and without any reference to his own obedience, he can give an unqualified tribute of admiration and say, "He doeth all things well:" and even when the divine will comes nearer, in a perso-

nal application of the precept, so long as obedience may be *postponed*, it is accepted with flattering words, and an assurance of upright intention to obey. In times of danger, or under any alarm at approaching trial, or especially when sick, and having the prospect of death, cries, professions, and loud appeals will be multiplied: God is invoked, promises are poured out into His ear, and the door of heaven is assailed with vociferated cries, by which God is entreated to come and deliver. On such occasions vows are repeated, and violent resolves are made, to be more upright for the future; and thus a bribe is produced, and proffered, by which the Hypocrite hopes to avert the threatening evil, and to propitiate God towards him. This is especially the case, when, by any secret transgression the sinner has plunged himself into difficulties, or brought himself into the danger of exposing his character, and blasting his reputation for sanctity; and where there is no humiliation for the offence, it will many times appear, as if the whole soul were agonized by true conviction and grief,—a state of mind that sometimes borders on despair, and that lasts as long as the evil threatens, but vanishes utterly away when the danger is gone. Thus he is a Hypocrite in all his transactions with the Almighty; and in the midst of continual appeals to the divine glory, remains destitute of any true apprehension of God's character and will.

When the Hypocrite directs his attention to the state of his own mind, wishing to impose upon himself the belief that things are better with him than they really are; he has no other method by which to succeed, than that of exaggerating to his own judgment what he fancies is good in him, and of depressing the standard by which the Lord judges men: he looks therefore much to his own frame, and sets a high value upon the excitements which he may have felt, from time to time: he calls to remembrance the times when his soul seemed to tremble under the proclamation of judgment; he loves to think of the moments when he was able to weep, and felt softened under the word; he calls to mind certain warm sensations which have passed his heart when at prayer; it does not trouble him to enquire, whence these excitements proceeded, nor does he enter into the question, of whether they were mere excitements of natural passions; he clings to them as to his idols, and counts upon them as able to deliver him from doubt of his interest in the Saviour. When he reads the Scriptures, his object is to obtain food for self-complacency: he therefore hastily passes over what tends to disturb his quiet, and seizes upon some promise, as upon a sign, or token, of his acceptance. When forced to observe his deficiency, he strives to believe that this is only the consequence of human weakness, and not condemnable sin: he wraps up conviction, and

dismisses his fears, trusting that his works, his profession, or his acknowledgment of weakness, will counterbalance the charge against him; particularly as he contrives to furnish himself with excuses for his transgression, by casting the fault upon some *occasion*, *temptation*, or circumstance, through which he was overcome, and which, according to his judgment of himself, had nothing to do with his own previous inclinations and will. Thus he rests in the supposition that all is safe, and that he stands as good a chance of escaping the general condemnation of sinners, as any of his fellow creatures.

Do not let us suppose such a state incredible; it might indeed appear so, when we ask what are the gains of a hypocrite? for after all his labour he obtains nothing but an increase to his ruin, and a more fearful prospect of everlasting woe. But it is too manifest a state to be denied, and the Scriptures are too plain upon the subject to admit of a doubt, as to the certainty that such a miserably deluded condition does certainly exist. Neither is it a state that is not to be *accounted* for; we may discover many reasons inducing the evil, and leading to a confirmed degree of it; and we may pursue our inquiry into this branch of the subject, with the sure guidance of the Scripture to assist us in the way.

It is to be remembered, that there is in man's heart a natural enmity to the Spirit's work.

The establishment of holiness in the soul is not what man naturally desires, and therefore he will not seek after this divine operation. Nevertheless he has a conscience, which testifies against his rebellion, and through its accusations he is frequently rendered restless. When this is the case, he has no resource but to seek some antidote to the pain that he feels, by some compliances with remonstrances that disturb him; and being utterly ignorant, as well as depraved, he betakes himself to the partial and external obedience, which costs him little, retaining at the same time his native aversion to spiritual service. We may therefore account for the hypocrite's profession from these two circumstances; he is ignorant and depraved, yet he is convicted and uneasy; his uneasiness induces him to take some measures for peace, his depravity renders him unreconciled to the true measure, and he ignorantly and wickedly adopts the hope of prevailing by imposition. There is also an equal abhorrence of what *humbles* the soul, or abases the pride of man. We naturally shrink from the exposure of truth when it refers to the condition of our own hearts, and this pride paves a high-way on which hypocrisy may boldly tread. It is desirable and pleasant to man, to look upon himself with complacency, and he learns to love the cheat which helps him to this ability. It belongs not to blinded nature to look with just

calculation into futurity, and therefore it is satisfied to possess present persuasion of peace, and is offended and exasperated against what would intrude upon its repose.

In respect of the *expectations* that attend the hypocrite, they are according to his particular purpose. In no case does he imagine that his attempt shall prove entirely fruitless; he has learnt that sin has disgrace attached to it, and that it is also dangerous; his expectation is that he shall avoid both the disgrace and the danger, if he can but prevail to conceal the evil; concealment, not cure, is his object, and this he flatters himself may be effected, both with God and man. There is also a *fashion* sometimes which renders religion creditable, and makes the profession a step to preferment; and many men will adopt this course of life, with no higher expectation than the hope of advancing a worldly project, and of being received into notice with the rich and great. In such instances, the motive, base as it is, is extremely powerful; for the love of this world, of money, of station, and of credit with great men, will always be found the prevalent passions of a sinner's heart, although developed in different forms; and if the name of religion will subserve these objects, the hypocrite can readily make it his own. It is possible also that persons may be led to profess religion, from what they at first imagine to be true feeling, and that after-

wards discovering, it has been nothing more than a superficial excitement, occasioned perhaps by the power of some speaker, or by the love of some creature, they become ashamed of retracting; and instead of seeking the genuine influence of the Holy Spirit's work, go on in the practice of hypocrisy, and plunge themselves deeper and deeper into this frightful abyss.

It is impossible to conceive of a condition more wretched than that of a hypocrite. In every respect it is fraught with evil, and must end in destruction. There is no sin that is exhibited in the Scriptures with more decided marks of the divine judgment, and universally the Lord hath declared it be most accursed in his eyes. It is rendered still more fearful on account of its *hardening* power, for it infatuates and conducts the sinner, step after step, to such a horrible increase of delusion and deceit, that he ceases to be susceptible of those misgivings which in the first stages proved some check upon his way; and having put out his own eyes, walks daringly and presumptuously on the brink of destruction; and stalks abroad in his filthiness and iniquity, forgetting that he is naked, and that God seeth his sin. It is not unfrequently, however, attended with misery; sometimes in the beginning, sometimes in the end, sometimes through the whole life of delusion; there will be in some men a degree

of misgiving, in spite of every effort to the contrary; they cannot find the rest they seek; many times they imagine that their fellow creatures are looking through the flimsey veil they wear, and that their true character is read; they interpret a look, an expression, a discourse, as if meant to carry an arrow to themselves; their mind is chafed by solicitude and fear of detection, and their heart is destitute of peace. When calamity comes, they begin to think that God is about to unmask them, and that his judgments are ready to come down, and every trouble is received as a messengèr of death, and a swift witness that must condemn their souls for ever. In instances where this degree of susceptibility is retained, it will frequently occur, that the death-bed is a fearful and frightful season. On this awful occasion, the conscience is roused, and the sentence of God is anticipated; he begins to realize what is meant by the affecting appeal, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite though he has gained, when God taketh away his soul?" Hope, he has none. Desolation and fear take hold upon him, and he dies in the endurance of those pangs, which seize upon the condemned, and are the just wages of sin! It is sometimes the lot of the hypocrite to experience, in reality, what his fears suggested, respecting the judgment of men; he is not able to maintain such consistency, even in his scanty obedience, as suffices to hide

him from the discerning; God's children see through his disguise, the world also detect him in his way; hence it frequently follows, that the wretched hypocrite not only gains nothing with God, but he is not exalted with men; he is despised by the world, he is distrusted and suspected by saints, and he lives without any of those possessions, for the sake of which he has been induced to fulfil every pretension to honesty, and forego every genuine enjoyment. Such is the life, and such is the end of the hypocrite, presenting us with a shocking spectacle of the degree of depravity to which a sinner can voluntarily deliver himself up, and forewarning us to beware of those evils which lead to such a frightful development of the corruption of a sinful heart.

We should apply this subject to our own heart, and not proudly and vainly throw off the idea of our own participation in the guilt. It is to be hoped, that we may have been preserved from the extent of this sin to which some sinners run, but we cannot truly affirm that none of its filthiness cleaves to us; we proudly and arrogantly boast ourselves of honesty, say we scorn to be hypocrites, and vaunt ourselves that even our sins are comparatively of honourable texture, since they are open and undisguised. Alas! how vain is man; and how lamentably does he pride himself where he ought to be abashed, and boast of possessions, in which

upon examination he is found wholly deficient. Ere we rank ourselves amongst those who presume that they are free from the charge of hypocrisy, let us carefully examine ourselves by the several descriptions that have been given of this sin. Are we at all times entirely honest, in every word, work, and look? Do these convey nothing but the exact image of what is passing in the heart? Are our conformities to the forms, and externals of religion, the genuine result of the soul's devotion to the God of salvation? and do we never wear the semblance of zeal, of worship, of charity, of deadness to the world, without a correspondent degree of affection in the breast? Is there no occasion in which our lips have uttered Lord, Lord, when the heart has been far from him? Did we never cry, and vow, and promise, in times of danger and distress, and mean nothing more than a bribe for some present deliverance? Have we never closed the eye upon our own corruptions, been unwilling to submit to scrutiny, and whispered smooth things to our souls, when we ought to have been humbled and penitent before God? A candid reply to these questions will give in a verdict against ourselves, and in every instance, wherein we can be proved transgressors on these grounds, there has been a species of hypocrisy, sufficient to demonstrate, that we have the same nature with the vilest hypocrite, and that if we have been

preserved from its gross expression, we are debtors to grace and not to our merit.

The fact is, that we are all dependent upon the justifying salvation that is established in Christ Jesus; and if we would for once be honest, we shall confess that none of our subterfuges can avail, and that God must undertake our cure, if ever we are put in possession of that spiritual uprightness, without which we cannot be saved. *Deceitfulness* belongs to our nature; in spiritual things it is desperate and subtle in its workings, and nothing short of regeneration will invest us with a *pure* heart. The result of this subject, if profitable to us, will therefore be a personal conviction of the sin as belonging to our nature, deep sorrow for every degree wherein it may have been betrayed, appeals to Jesus' blood for the removal of the guilt that has been contracted, earnest desire after the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, to give us new and holy principles, and the cultivation of the sense of the omniscience of the Almighty, which may teach us the folly of hypocrisy, and lead us to the joy of keeping our heart naked and open to him.

Can we produce Scripture evidence that there is such a state as that of a religious hypocrite?

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and

for a pretence make long prayers." Matt. xxiii. 14. See also Acts v. 1—4.

Can we prove that this hypocrisy may be directed to the end of imposing upon men, by assuming the appearance of religious zeal, &c.?

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte." Matt. xxiii. 15.

"There are many unruly, and vain talkers, and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." Tit. i. 10, 11.

"How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye, and behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye." Matt. vii. 4, 5.

When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men." Matt. vi. 2.

Can we prove that this hypocrisy will direct itself in endeavours to impose upon God with flattering words, &c.?

"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy

name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 22, 23. See also Job xxvii. 8—10. Isa. xxix. 13.

Will hypocrisy be evidenced by self-delusion, and by criminating others?

"He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. xliv. 20. See also 1 Sam. xv. 14, 15.

Is this sin accursed of God?

"The hypocrite's hope shall perish, whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." Job viii. 13, 14. Matt. xxiii. 25—33. Isa. xxxiii. 14.

Is it of a hardening nature?

"Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." 1 Tim. iv. 2. See also 2 Tim. iii. 13.

Is the hypocrite's joy transient and unsound?

"The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." Job xx. 5. See also Acts v. 5, 6.

UPRIGHTNESS.

CHRISTIAN uprightness is an excellence, which forms so important a branch of the life of faith, that it demands our most serious investigation: without it there can be no spiritual life; and without the consciousness of the blessing, there will be no spiritual peace. It stands directly opposed to Hypocrisy, and may be considered in the character of guardian to the heavenly course of a believer, since it is instrumental in preserving the soul from evil, and in exciting to every honest attention to the profession of the faith. We must here bear in mind, that it is not mere human virtue, but the existence of a divine grace, that we are about to consider; otherwise we may, in the opening of our inquiry, fall into a serious error. It is well known, that there is such a thing as *natural integrity*; a powerful principle, leading a man to the upright discharge of his duties as a member of society, and prompting him to consult for those things which are of good report in the world: and this disposition will also, in some instances, extend its influence to the inquiry which may

be directed to religious subjects, inducing a man to exercise a candid judgment, and to resist the temptations to false arguments and subterfuges, which so continually occur. This was eminently the disposition of Gamaliel, who reasoned with great candour against the persecuting measures pursued against the apostles, and whose mind was in this respect upright,—desiring that truth might be made to appear, and that men should not be condemned with precipitation and pride. Nicodemus also was actuated by the same principle.—When contemplating the miracles wrought by our Lord, he admitted their greatness, and drew sound conclusions respecting Christ, in consequence of this undeniable evidence. These things are lovely and desirable so far as they extend, and render a man much more respectable in life, and much more accessible to the reasonings of God's word: nevertheless, they are not what is meant by Christian uprightness. This is the effect of the operation of God, the Holy Ghost, in the work of regeneration. It is He who removes the obstructions that arise to this disposition, and by the omnipotent power of His will introduces the holy simplicity of faith into the heart: and never will a sinful breast become the region where this impartial and vigorous character prevails, until it is the subject of that new-creating love of God, which rectifies the evils of nature, and imparts a new spring

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of action. This will decidedly appear as we advance in this inquiry.

The first work which this powerful deliverer effects, is an inward reconciliation to the nature of Christ's kingdom. As natural aversion to the government of Christ is the origin of hypocrisy, so, *love* of that government is one of the most decisive marks of an upright mind. This government, consisting as it does of the subjecting of a sinner to the sway of the Saviour, will sometimes seem severe, and the flesh is ready to start aside: but the Holy Spirit is the keeper of the soul, and, by the inwrought love of holiness and longing after it, renders the heart in a state of preparation for whatever *uprightness* may be required to meet. In respect of the hidden corruptions of the heart also, there will be a readiness humbly to accept and read any discoveries that are made. The Holy Ghost removes that pertinacious will in which we are obstinate defenders of self, and makes us willing to see what we are, and to desire to be cleansed and made more meet for His presence: so that the soul is put upon seeking a *cure*, not a *cover* for sin; and desires to *be* a saint, and not merely to appear such. This is a preparatory work, by which the Lord is pleased to shed abroad in the heart pure and simple desires and designs, and through which the subjects that are spiritual are taken up with integrity, and become the honest discussion of

a mind that entirely desires to know the Lord and to obey His will.

With this disposition, it will follow of course, that in the three particulars, wherein the hypocrite is full of subtlety and deceit, *he* is filled with simplicity and truth; and as these particulars comprehend the whole of a man's life, we perceive that uprightness sheds its precious influence through the believer's existence, and makes him rise superior to the deceitfulness of sin, which would destroy him. As in many of the duties which belong to man's relation to the world, to God, and to himself, there are requirements, which put him upon what is externally the same act as that of the hypocrite, it becomes necessary that we exercise discrimination, and look into the *motive* of action; otherwise we might be led to undervalue or neglect those expressions of faith in which it is proper for us to live. Thus the believer will, equally with the hypocrite, desire to express before men a *religious zeal*, that shall display his devotion to the Lord: he knows that whosoever will inherit the final blessings of Christ's kingdom, must not be ashamed of Jesus here: he has also an ardent love in his own soul to his redeeming Saviour, which naturally prompts to such demonstrations as render his profession visible;—nor is it possible that, whilst under the influence of such a divine principle, he should be unknown as a disciple of the Cross.

This motive, however, is altogether different from that of the hypocrite : he does not *assume* his zeal that he may be seen of men ; he acts from the inward spring of genuine affection, and he desires to be known to be a disciple, because he seeks the glory of God in his salvation and sanctification, and would live as a monument of divine power and grace. He will also earnestly desire to persuade his fellow-sinners to embrace those views and means which he has found beneficial to his own soul. It is not that he desires to increase a particular party, or to win a multitude to testify of *his* work ; but he is animated by a spirit of charity which embraces the interest of the never-dying soul of man, and he will leave nothing undone by which he may be the accepted instrument in inducing men to reflect upon their ways, and to listen to the testimony of truth. Punctuality and earnestness are displayed also, in attending every ordinance and means, both public and private. The appetite of the soul will prompt to this, and the desire of exhibiting a consistent profession will put the mind upon vigorous exertion to resist every temptation to deviate from this course ; combining also attention to all those demands, upon body, and property, and time, which the Lord justly makes upon His people ; and seeking constantly to be occupied in the sacred duties of family worship, visiting the sick, administering to the neces-

sitous, and contributing to the promotion of Christ's kingdom in the earth. He will not have pleasure in expatiating upon the sins of others: mercy and charity abound in his heart: nevertheless, he is quick to discern the evils which exist in the world, and amongst professors, and as faithful in reproving them also, taking occasion, when the opportunities demand it, to testify against offences, and to declare them offensive and provoking to God:—a holy zeal, which is expressed with equal faithfulness towards himself, and which will not reprove or condemn the transgression in another, that he would cover or allow in his own soul. Thus, whilst the hypocrite and the upright may in many things adopt the same line of conduct, and, to superficial observers, appear exactly to correspond, there is an essential difference in their real state; for the motives by which they are governed are wholly at variance; and integrity giving the hallowed character of "holiness to the Lord," to the deeds of the upright, renders his sacrifices peculiar in their nature, and precious before his God.

We shall find an equal necessity to look to the secret spring of action, as it respects the duties of the upright, performed more peculiarly unto his God; for here also there will be an apparent similarity with the hypocrite. It will be the delight of the believer to call upon the Most High, addressing Him by those en-

deared names, which proclaim His grace and His people's privilege. To call Him, "Lord, Lord," is a precious exercise to such as know His glory and love His rule; and many times the knee is bent, and the tongue is loosed, to give Him the honour that is due, and to profess adherence to His blessed cause. In public and in private, this will be the Christian's dearest occupation: he comes with alacrity into the presence of his everlasting Friend, and he owns Him in all those relations which form the substance of his hope. In addition to the habitual exercise of devotion, he will also experience an increase of vehemence in his soul's desires, in proportion to the time of trial or need which comes upon him. It is not that he cries in the desperation of terror, or in the earnestness of selfish desires; but he is sensible of the pressure of a time of affliction, and knows that none can uphold or deliver him but God alone. On this account he reiterates his supplication, as to a long-tried friend, and pleads with earnestness, as to one who, for his own name's sake, stands engaged to help His servants. In these respects, there will be a likeness with such as are moved by no genuine faith; and we are not to be surprised, when we find the upright stirred up by some present painful circumstance, to pray, and to wrestle, and to cry with a fervour which possibly was not equally visible in the time of peace. It is not that he has more love or more

sincerity than in times of prosperity, but he is in a condition that calls for a more particular interposition of the Lord's goodness, and for this the Lord delights to be sought with corresponding energies. In the midst of these things, however, in which the hypocrite and the upright would seem to agree, there are others in which we shall discover no similarity. Looking into the spirit of the upright, we discover affections that a deceiver can never realize; notwithstanding the vehemence of increased prayer and desire, there is a holy submission of soul that renders the will acquiescent in the divine decree. Much as the believer would rejoice in receiving such an answer to his prayers as should deliver him from his afflictions, he does not dictate to the Lord; he willingly leaves the result of his appeal with his heavenly Father, and patiently commits his trial, whether it is of mind or body, to the government of Him whom he loves; and even when most opposed to nature, that decision which comes from the mercy-seat is accepted, as altogether wisest and best. In every daily experience likewise, the same sanctification of spirit will prevail, leading the upright soul to honesty in all that professed subjection which he utters with his lips. If he has entered into vows and solemn engagements in the day of his calamity, in the day of his deliverance he will "pay that he has vowed:" his promises were sincere, and his diligence is

directed towards the fulfilment of every word that he has spoken. Or if it respects the usual course to which God's providence points him, he is equally intent upon maintaining faithfulness. In this path God may meet him with a requirement that startles his natural feeling, and suggests an alarm to his heart; but when he ascertains that this is God's will, the power of the divine life rises to the trial, and he will not decline from God's way. Afflictions, calamity, crucifixion, mortification, may appear before him, but in the integrity of his heart he first took up the cross, with resolve to follow Christ, bearing it without weariness; and in the same integrity he encounters the day of exercise, and is obedient to the voice which bids him to suffer or to die. To the upright nothing is more dreadful than the withdrawments of the divine tokens of favour: rather than endure this, all other evils are preferred. It is an intolerable grief to move the Lord to any expression of displeasure, and it is also an all-sufficient portion to possess His uplifted countenance upon the way: therefore the thorny path is entered and trod without any disposition to turn back; and the tumult of human feeling that will sometimes arise within, is made to subside, when the Lord's will seems to say, "Peace, be still." The upright will give evidence of integrity also, by the tenderness of conscience which starts from the *appearance* of

evil. *Little* things, as they are called, appear great to such a man; and whatever has the semblance of dereliction from duty will be abhorrent to the mind. It will follow, that situations of danger and temptation will be dreaded and avoided; and that having an honesty of intention to abstain even from the appearance of evil, those occasions which open a way for the tempter will be cut off. These are affections of soul, that decidedly justify his character as a true servant of the eternal God, and by which it becomes evident to those who look into the spring of action, that he is altogether different in principle to the hypocrite.

Nor is the evidence less decided as it respects his duties towards himself. He does not ignorantly refuse the comfort, which may justly be derived from pleasurable frames and feelings: these are very agreeable to his spirit, and refresh him from time to time; but they are far from being the foundation of his hope, or the chief source of his confidence: experience has shown him that these are transitory, and that it is possible also they may exist, where there is no vital religion. This persuasion keeps him on his guard against the excitements of unsound feelings, and makes him ready to sift and prove even such as are genuine: when he discovers any corrupt mixture in his emotions, he repents, and offers the evil in sacrifice to the Lord; and when he finds, upon examination, that the

emotion is from the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, he rejoices, receiving the visitation as one of mercy from God, and desiring to be quickened in duty by such unmerited favours. Flattering appearances would have no charm to him, if he could not be persuaded that they were attended with a correspondent life within: he is *upright*, and therefore nothing can satisfy him but such things as God will approve. A spiritual vigilance follows this state of soul towards every part of the life of faith. The spirit is restless in charging it upon the heart to be steadfast to the vows that have bound it to the Cross; and in the investigation of the inward life, an impartial scrutiny is perpetually going on. So far from shrinking from the examination, the earnest desire is to be sifted and proved; and whenever there is an inclination to start at the touch of the probe, this indication of disease is followed by a still greater diligence in ascertaining the reason, why there was this demonstration of reluctancy to be touched; so that if it arose from mistake of conscience, all misgiving may be removed; and if it was really from some hidden evil, the malady might be explored and encountered with resolution, to apply the gospel remedies. Those aids which are afforded through the reproofs of others, or by the counsel of friends, or through the censures of the world, are accepted with gratitude, as instrumental, either to convince of sin, or to render holiness

more visible; and in the integrity of an honest mind they are always well weighed in a comparison with the real state of the soul, and used accordingly. Most men are also conscious that there is some constitutional sin, by which they are most readily exposed to fall. Some men are naturally proud, some indolent, some uncharitable, &c. &c. as a besetting sin, or as a kind of master passion, leading others, and giving the particular colour to the character. The upright man has discovered where his besetting sin lies, and is ever on his guard against its operations; he fears its force, and its subtlety; he watches the movements of his spirit, on occasions wherein it is likely to break forth; he marks the hidden feeling which betrays its existence, and, even where there has been no visible expression of the sin, he considers himself called to a renewed expression of humiliation for the lurking depravity, and to renewed application to the blood of sprinkling, and the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost. This is a state of soul that belongs peculiarly to spiritual integrity, and that will invariably attend the man whose honest desire is to glorify God, and really to be a saint or sanctified one.

Thus we may compare the hypocrite and the upright: we shall find them in some things presenting the same features, for the deceiver can ofttimes be very expert in his imitations of

the true disciple; but if we will take the trouble of comparing them in the whole of their course, and of looking to things that are internal as well as to such as are external, we shall presently discern where they part company, and where all similarity and likeness must cease. The excellent motives which govern the regenerate, are of such a nature as to distinguish him before God; and even to men they cannot be hid. There are times and seasons in the course of his pilgrimage, wherein he will necessarily prove that he lives by a supernatural principle; his profession is embued with love to God, and is maintained in faith; and these principles will live when the hypocrite's must perish and leave him in shame. Whatever may be the fashion of the day in which the upright man professes his faith, that faith remains the same; it is independent of worldly motives, or sinister views, and therefore is not subject to injury from the change of times. If times of religious prosperity are around him, he rejoices that the church of Christ is honoured, and that sinners are edified; but if all men forsake him, or if the interests of the church are in deepest depression, this will not shake his soul; his pathway may be solitary as to human companions, but he travels in company with his God; and having a single eye and simple faith, he takes nothing into consideration but the Lord's favour, and such duties as He requires at

his hand. Thus the work of grace decides its own character, and proves that it is a perfect work, wrought by that Almighty Saviour who doth all things well.

The advantages that attend this disposition are numerous, and such as may increase our estimation of the blessed experience. Let us inquire into some of the privileges which God has annexed to the grace of uprightness. In the first place, we are assured, that God "doth weigh the path of the just," or upright one: this is an unspeakable privilege, which none but the upright can understand or estimate. It is infinitely merciful in the Lord thus minutely to regard the concerns and the way of His servant; and it is highly consolatory, because such inspection from such a Friend must needs be attended with spiritual increase. He weighs that He may approve what answers to the balance of the sanctuary, and that He may separate what will not result in the believer's enrichment; and they who perceive the Lord's design in this respect, so highly appreciate the promise, that they continually turn it into prayer, entreating the Lord that He would search the ground of the heart, look well if there be any way of wickedness there, and lead them in the way everlasting. It is promised also, that "the countenance of the Lord will behold the upright:" this is a great privilege, cheering the pilgrim through his various labours, and

making his course joyous and safe: with the bright beams of the divine presence the saint has a portion that gladdens him in every condition. It affords him the inward witness which seals him to eternal life, in such clear and unquestionable evidence, that he possesses a sure weapon against the assaults of the adversary, and can repel the accuser with a holy boldness. In the midst of those ordinances and means which he enjoys, the upright man is prepared to derive the fullest extent of the nourishment that is provided: he is kept from that doubting and anxious state which attends a double mind: he can instantly take the testimony for his own, because he is conscious that he is walking with innocency: he is not offended by any thing that is proclaimed or proposed, for he only desires to be informed in God's will. He will therefore always find the pastures of the Lord full of food to his soul, and cannot leave the place of counsel without having derived something through which he is strengthened for his way. He will also be blest with continual victories over sin: when encountering his enemy he will not war deceitfully, but putting forth all the grace he has to the conflict, he will find the promise true, and the strength of his Lord made perfect in his weakness. The Holy Ghost owns him as a true soldier of the Cross, and delights in adorning him with the trophies of triumph over the foe. Or, should he be at

any time foiled through ignorance or weakness, still he is not deprived of his spiritual comforts: so long as he cannot charge himself with any allowed sin, he believes that the Comforter will not withdraw; and in the consciousness of uprightness he can still utter the tribute of blessing to his Lord, and take up new resolutions to contend with his enemies in increased determination. Having finished his course in this world, the upright man receives a farther testimony, which the grace of the covenant freely and richly bestows upon him, both in the moments of death and in the day of eternity. When dying, the Saviour draws near to his bed of pain, and attends him with administering mercy: He honours the servant that has honoured Him, and is ready with bountiful love to anticipate the sentence to be pronounced in the invisible world: sweetly does He sustain him with secret communications of strength, and kindly and tenderly assuage his pains and griefs, by applying the promise with power. He permits him also to call to remembrance the days he has spent with his Lord during the journey through the wilderness, and to delight in the evidence of a work of grace that knit him in truth to his Saviour. It is not that his own uprightness is the source of his consolations, but it is used by the Spirit as a means of assuring him that his past warfare has been to the Lord, and that it has been a true and genuine work of

the indwelling Spirit: this frequently being a necessary persuasion in such moments, to cheer the dying saint under Satan's last assaults, and to afford him evidence that he has not been deceived in his profession whilst in health. The acknowledgment which the Lord bestows upon His servant, is not limited to this period: in the future world he will confess his name, and the upright shall be exhibited to assembled worlds, in the splendour of that inheritance to which they have been appointed in the covenant of life in Christ.

In the grace of uprightness, as in every other holy disposition, there are different degrees; and although it is essential to a state of grace, and must be possessed by every inheritor of the kingdom of God, we are not to suppose that every regenerate person has the same eminence in this excellence. The principle is the same in all, for it is the grace of the Holy Ghost; but, in some men it is developed in great energy of character, in others its development is feeble, and like a sickly plant. This is owing to a difference in the vigour with which faith puts forth itself to the several branches of Christian profession. Some persons allow themselves to be greatly encumbered by worldly considerations, or have a cowardly mind in the field of battle; others have a great ardour in coming forth from the world, and are bold and resolute in their warfare: the encumbered will con-

tinually depress his soul in the grace of uprightness, and the liberated will give room for integrity to strike deeper root, and to throw forth its branches in greater luxuriancy. This being the case, it becomes evident, that we are called to make some personal effort towards the attainment of high degrees in this Christian grace, and that, if we would possess the privileges attendant upon the disposition, we must direct our attention to cherish the disposition itself. This will be done by hearkening to its voice, allowing it to speak, and loving its counsels, resisting the reasonings and corruptions that would at any time interfere with its dictates, and keeping close to the paths of the Lord both outwardly and inwardly, ever seeking to be conformed to the Divine Will in the Spirit's power.

To believers this subject should be exceedingly important; its truth is confirmed to us by constant evidence, example, and experience; we know that in every instance wherein uprightness fails in its energies, we fail in our consolations; we know that whensoever it fulfils its appointed work, we are visited with God's faithful witness. This should be sufficient to quicken us in the duty, since to us, as believers, the whole of our true portion and peace is in the possession of this witness of God's love. And, particularly, we ought to be stirred

up by the anticipation of the approaching hour, when we shall quit all human interests, and when, if we are doubtful as to the integrity with which we may have professed the name of Jesus, we shall proportionably be harassed by the enemy. We do not substitute this grace for the blood and righteousness of our only and great Redeemer.—God forbid, that any mixture in this respect should be found in our dependance;—this would be one of the most awful proofs of want of uprightness, in fleeing to the cross; nevertheless, we do press upon the attention of all who follow the Lamb, that excellent fruit of the Spirit, upon which God himself has been pleased to put so much honour; and we are certainly taught by the scriptures, that in proportion to this disposition, we shall experience God's gracious testimony of approving love.

Can we prove from the scriptures, that Christian uprightness is a gracious fruit of the Holy Ghost?

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm li. 10.

Is uprightness attended with a visible and zealous profession before men, leading to labour to persuade sinners—to plead for truth—to attend instituted means, and to testify against sin?

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." Rom. i. 16. And see 2 Cor. xi. 23—28.

"I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." 1 Cor. ix. 19.

"Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." Jude 3.

"I know thy works, and thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." Rev. ii. 19. See also Heb. x. 24, 25.

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost:" Acts vii. 51.

Are the motives, actuating the upright in these duties, different from those moving the hypocrite?

"Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Acts iii. 12.

"Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts v. 41.

"I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some; and this I do for the Gospel's sake." 1 Cor. ix. 22, 23. See also 2 Tim. ii. 10.

"As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Peter ii. 2.

"Count him not as an enemy, but admonish

him as a brother." 2 Thess. iii. 15. See also Gal. vi. 1.

Will the upright profess towards God ardent affiance, and multiply his supplications according to the times of need?

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength: the Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower: I will call upon the Lord." Psalm xviii. 1—3.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." 2 Cor. xii. 8.

Does the upright man prove his integrity by preferring God's will to his own, even though painful to nature?

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Cor. xii. 9. See also John x. 4.

Will he dread the divine displeasure, and make conscience of all things that might offend?

"Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Psalm li. 11.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption." Eph. iv. 30.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil." I Thess. v. 22.

"The high-way of the upright is to depart from evil." Prov. xvi. 17.

Is uprightness demonstrated in dealings with self, so that the upright man desires to be sifted and proved?

"For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but He that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. iv. 4.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me." Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

Is he ready to accept reproof &c?

"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness." Psalm cxli. 5.

Will he guard against besetting sins?

"I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity." Psalm xviii. 23.

Can we prove from scripture, that God acknowledges the upright according to what has been here affirmed?

"The way of the just is uprightness: Thou, most Upright, dost weigh the paths of the just." Isaiah xxvi. 7.

"For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness: his countenance doth behold the upright." Psalm xi 7.

"Do not my words do good to him that

walketh uprightly." Micah ii. 7. See also Hosea xiv. 9.

"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil, he shall dwell on high." Isaiah xxxiii. 15, 16.

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Psalm xxxvii. 37.

"And the upright shall have dominion over him in the morning." Psalm xlix. 14.

ENMITY AGAINST GOD.

It must at once appear an awful fact, that such a monstrous condition, as that of enmity against God, should exist in the breast of man: nevertheless, it is so plainly revealed as a state inseparably connected with the fallen condition of the sinner, that it ceases to be a point of dispute with those who accept the Scriptures as their standard of judgment. We enter upon the investigation of this subject, in order to lead the mind into a serious contemplation of the fearful result that awaits the soul, if this evil is not removed, and that we may obtain increased conviction of our need of God's recovering and healing grace.

Enmity signifies aversion: it is a sensation well understood by too many in their connexion with their fellow-creatures: persons at enmity are such as have separated on some ground of offence, and who retain a deep-seated hatred of each other, and in whose hearts there abideth a determination to remain in the spirit of malice and revenge. It may also exist against those who have committed no offence, and arise out

of some native tendency in the heart to abhor or loathe the object against whom it is directed. Enmity is an expression which is applied both to the feelings of the heart and to the actions of men; for we are accustomed to say, 'Such a man has great enmity in his heart,' or, 'This is a vile act of enmity.' When felt towards God, it consists of a deadly aversion to Him, as an object from whom the heart turns with loathing and distaste: it is also expressed in its most extensive character, for it reigns in the soul and riots in the life. This awful disposition sprang from man's first revolt: it is the same as what is sometimes styled the *carnal* mind, and thus the Apostle describes it; "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Rom. viii. 7. It follows, therefore, that it is a sin of our *nature*, since all men are naturally carnal; that is, by the fall of man, nature became sensual, gross, and destitute of all spiritual appetite, having also a vehement desire after gratifications that are fleshly, and that correspond with a vitiated taste; and hence it followed, that not only were the service and nature of God without attraction to the sinner, but they became loathsome, and when considered as opposed to the indulgence of fleshly appetites, subjects of *enmity*. The glorious excellency of that Almighty God, who is a Spirit, whose name is holy, and whose laws are pure, was not such as the debased creature could assimilate with: the little light that remained upon natural con-

science, served only to reveal what the soul of man revolted from: the divine presence was unbearable, and the divine requirement a bond of restraint, such as served only to awaken resentment and resistance. This miserable reverse of the condition of the creature was instantly introduced into the whole nature, and has continued to run through every succeeding generation, and henceforth man is addressed by the Lord as universally under the dominion of this spirit of apostacy. The scripture terms are too express to be mistaken: the Apostle affirms, when writing to the Romans, that the Gentile world exhibited this resolve, "they did *not like* to retain God in their knowledge—*haters* of God." Rom. i. 28, 30. The testimony of the Prophets assures us also, that this was no evil confined to the more ignorant heathen, but that even those people who were peculiarly privileged by light, and ordinances, and mercies, had the same disposition: they voluntarily changed their glory for that which doth not profit, forsaking the Lord, that they might follow the gods of the heathen; yea, they altogether brake the yoke, and burst the bonds. Jer. ii. 11. v. 5. And Jesus also testified to his disciples of that world from which they were called to separate, "it *hated me* before it hated you." There is somewhat so monstrous in this sin, that we are all disposed to pronounce it most accursed; and so long as we contemplate the evil in theory, we

are at agreement that it is justly abhorred of God. We must each confess, that it is foreign to the *desert* of the Almighty. His own nature is infinitely glorious, and might demand a tribute of *admiration*, even were there no results from that nature that were beneficial to us: but, when we consider what are the demonstrations of that glory extended to this world, we may truly express our amazement, that such a favoured creature as man should be capable of hating the source from whence all his blessings flow. Great has been the divine goodness and bounty in the creation, investing man with indescribable distinctions and elevation: mighty have been the proofs of God's continued remembrance of His creature, displayed in redemption, and perpetually acting in providence: nor is there a moment that does not come laden with some new proof of the divine faithfulness and power. Here, then, we discover no ground for the quarrel,—no reason for the enmity; the Lord Jehovah stands justified in all His ways, as the bountiful good and unchangeable benefactor of man, and may well urge His appeal, "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord; Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto Thee?"

That it is equally foreign to the proper condition of the creature, will probably be acknowledged. Is it not *suitable*, that the creature

should express its dependance upon the Creator? And is it not reasonable to conclude, that the benefits received should find some principle of gratitude within the heart? To break from these obligations, is to demonstrate a fearful perverseness, and a wicked opposition to the claims that should be the most powerful, affording us but a too decisive evidence of our native rebellion, of the awful dissimilarity of our nature, taste, and inclination to God, and of the assimilation of native taste, and inclination with Satan, the great adversary of the Lord. The fact is, that we "drink in iniquity like water," and that we are "of our father the devil." The state is, however, miserable and ruinous, and will lead to that final condemnation in which haters of God must be banished from Him for ever: for they who have lived in enmity against Him here, must be delivered over to the dominion of their apostate disposition, in a world of everlasting woe.

There are certain marks, or demonstrations, of this native disposition, which ought to be examined.—We are not at liberty to judge of this subject, as it refers to others, without making an individual and personal application of the testimony: this is best done by looking to the fruits which we bear, and by endeavouring to discover how far the evidences may condemn or vindicate our own state. Alas! in our unregenerate condition, we can expect to find

only the fruit that enmity against God will produce; and, unless we are under the power of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, we shall find that our life and conversation determine us on the side of the enemy.

What is the judgment that we should form, were we to see two persons living in close association with each other, whose tastes, pursuits, opinions, were evidently but *one*, and who, notwithstanding occurrences that might naturally tend to weaken confidence, or generate distance, were yet as firmly linked as ever, retaining a friendship that triumphed over all opposition, and defied all assault or convulsion? Certainly, we draw the conclusion, that there must be in such a case some irresistible attraction, some close congeniality; and we are not surprised to find that a friend of this description will espouse the cause of his selected companion, and quarrel, or oppose, or preserve distance with, any whom he considers opposed to his friend—the interest is one. Now let us apply this reasoning to the spiritual subject we are here considering. We see a man living in close association with the world,—it is evident his taste, his pursuits, his opinions, are all modelled according to the course of this world, his adherence is unshaken notwithstanding innumerable and painful evidences of its unsoundness and vanity, his experience is that of disappointment, he has had reason to distrust his friend, nevertheless the tie is not

broken, the link is firm as ever. We conclude, therefore, that there subsists a firm friendship, arising out of congeniality and strong attraction,—the *interest is one.* Such a man is prepared to quarrel, oppose, or preserve distance with, whatever stands in opposition to the world; and hence he necessarily stands in arms against the Most High, for God is the adversary of a world that lies in wickedness, and has already sentenced it to destruction;—it *is not of the Father,* it is not the friend of God's honour, and so decided is the point, as it respects the friend of this world, that he is declared to be the *enemy of God;* "for whosoever will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God." This enmity is also manifested by a confederacy with Satan and sin: not only are the things of the world beloved, but sin is cherished and indulged within the heart, and Satan is confessed, as the reigning power to whom subjection is given: this is done openly and avowedly by sinners, who daringly live in the bond of death, and whose lives proclaim that they are enlisted under the banner of God's professed foes. Thus, wherever there is an evidence, that a man lives in willing confederacy with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, there we may justly affix the charge, he is at enmity against God;—His authority, His sanctity, His mercy, and His power are alike despised and defied.

This inward principle may be further de-

tected by the circumstance of that remarkable propensity which makes a man break the divine command, the more desperately in proportion as he is checked or restrained. There is something so violent in the *pride* of this enmity, that it will not brook a law from the Lord; and even where the lusts of nature would seem to slumber, or lay dormant, whilst precept is unknown, no sooner does the commandment come than sin revives, and, taking *occasion* by the commandment, becomes more riotous and persisting in its demands; it seems only to be needful to *prohibit*, in order to excite determination to covet; and we may compare the corruption of man to some flowing river, which runs smoothly whilst it meets no obstruction, but which dashes and foams against some bank or dam raised against it, seeming loudly to resent the impediment to its stream; just so is it with the torrent of depraved desire in a carnal heart, and just so does it express a resentful enmity against the obstruction which God's precept has mercifully thrown up to the course of sin and death, that the transgressor is pursuing.

Nor is this all: not only do restraints awaken resentment, but even the overtures of mercy prove occasions for enmity to assume a more formal expression. Men are so intent upon the way of sin, that they are not at leisure to listen when God calls; and the apostate heart is so irreconcileable, that in vain does the Almighty

condescend to make proposals of peace. The exhibition of a crucified Redeemer, in and through whom friendship might be established with Him from whom we have deeply revolted, is a spectacle from which the eyes are averted; the report of His long-suffering and grace finds no acceptance; man is like the deaf adder, he turneth away from the charmer, and will not listen to the Saviour's voice. How obstinately does he labour to erase every recollection of the divine revelation, or how industriously seek to evade its force: how determinately does he refuse every lesson that his own experience might present before his soul: he cannot admit the terms of peace, he is resolved to be at enmity still! The Lord has in mercy assumed every method most calculated to win upon the human mind: He has unfolded the greatest glories and joys awaiting the obedient; He has faithfully proclaimed the severest penalties to be inflicted upon the rebellious; He has engaged to give a full oblivion to all past offences, if only now the sinner will return; He has promised to impart Almighty strength, whereby to encounter every adversary, if only the fatal league with death will be broken; these gracious engagements are reiterated year after year, and day after day, with unwearied compassion, and the voice of mercy is ever crying aloud in the transgressor's ear, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" whilst, with open arms,

He stands and exclaims, "Come unto me, and ye shall find rest!" In addition to this, cold winds blow from the desert, storm and tempest are continually descending, and trouble and disappointment sicken the heart in its wanderings through the earth: the vagrant is ever seeking comfort, and never finding it: he is always aspiring after some object which he imagines shall content him, and is always persuaded by the experiment that his expectations are vain. And wherefore is it thus? why not turn from the dreariness of this destructive region, and enter the spiritual Eden where there is fulness for ever? Alas! his heart is at enmity, and the world, with all its wretchedness, is preferred to the bosom of One in whom he has no delight, and from whom he invariably turns away:—had he not a natural aversion to God, this miserable infatuation and madness could not prevail.

We have a further development of this native condition, in the state of a soul that is under the operation of divine grace;—and, perhaps, this sinful distaste of God is never contemplated in a more affecting point of view. We know, notwithstanding the enmity of a sinner's heart against God, that the love of God to the sinner is unconquerable; and that where He placeth His purpose of mercy, He will not be disappointed of His design. He loves freely, and with an everlasting love: hence it follows, that

His people are made willing in the day of His power. But notwithstanding this, what an awful resistance takes place in the whole man: how does the soul struggle to get free from the operation of grace, hating the light, dreading the cross, stifling conviction, fighting for idols, contending with the Almighty, even when in measure subdued, desperately adhering to the idea of making only a *conditional* surrender, and holding out to the last in resolute opposition to the Lord. And what is the effect which takes place when the Holy Spirit obtains the victory? Is it not the taking the old man *captive*, and the introduction of a kingdom which is only maintained through vigilance, war, and in much tribulation? And are we not informed, that so immoveable is the principle of hatred to God in the carnal mind, that *this* "mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be?" Alas! the conflicting believer experiences this truth to the end of his pilgrimage: and, although he advances in grace and knowledge, and is made more than conqueror through Him that loved him, he has a deep sense of the inbred corruption that is ready to revolt, or that is perpetually depressing his spiritual enjoyments, and withholding him from that enlargement of delight in God after which the new man is ever panting. Were it not that this body of death is still experienced, we should not have to hear the saint uttering his groans,

we should not listen to complaints of deadness in prayer, and disinclination to the high exercise of meditation and fellowship with God. These are humiliating marks of our native state, and proclaim what we are, save as the Spirit of holiness is our indwelling helper and Lord. And as they are the language of every experienced believer, it is demonstrated, that there remaineth within us, even when under the divine operation of grace, a law in our members warring against the law in our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin that is in our members.

We cannot imagine that a condition of mind thus opposed to every thing that is holy, and to every obligation that is most sacred, can be acceptable, or admissible, before God: in all bearings it is monstrous, and condemnable, and must eventually reduce such as continue under its dominion to a state of hopeless ruin. There can be no region of peace, in the eternal world, for such as are found haters of God; nor is there any possibility that this disposition should be removed, when once it has passed into the everlasting habitation of the soul; a change in the character of a man is never effected but during the day of grace, which is limited to *time;* and vain is the delusive imagination that amuses some men, leading them to look for some undefined influence, or operation, by which they fancy, that notwithstanding a career of

rebellion in this life, they shall be associated at last with the friends of the Lord: they who inherit that blissful condition are previously subdued by a new creating act of the Spirit, and we should be persuaded, that living and dying without this change, we have awaiting us only that condemnation and heritage which belongs to the power of darkness. God's mercy has provided us with awful records, in which we have the character, the course, and the end, of such men placed before our eyes. We have seen the madness of human pride ending in the downfall of its wretched votary: we have traced the progress of determined resistance of the Almighty, and have seen how in such instances as Cain, Pharaoh, Ahab, and others, judgment has overtaken the rebel, and consigned him to endless woe; nor is it to individuals alone that the Spirit directs our attention, the deluge which covered a whole world, and the judicial blindness resting upon a whole nation, proclaim aloud, that the enemies of the Lord shall not escape the vengeance of his arm, and that whosoever would be found in safety, or peace, must break a confederacy thus obstinate and foul.

Reflections should arise in our hearts that correspond with this statement. That it is scriptural, and according to the revelation which God has given of human depravity, is unquestionable; and that it is substantiated by the evidences that crowd upon our observation, is

equally undeniable. When we look into our own history, we shall also discover that evidences of our individual participation in the ruin, are striking and confounding to the soul. We have lived without God in the world—we have possessed dispositions determinately opposed to His nature and requirements—we have demonstrated an awful assimilation of taste with God's enemy the devil; and we have pursued the course of this world without attention to his prohibition, who has commanded that we love not the world. Alas! desperation, and proud resistance of the overtures of mercy, have also debased and corrupted us, and proved our native enmity; and if we take a candid retrospect of the past, we must confess, the most surprising infatuation, and perverseness, have testified, that we are naturally resolved upon war against God. Such a conviction of personal sin ought deeply to humble us: let us not fall into the temptation of palliating our crimes, or of putting *milder terms* upon our depravity than it deserves: rather let sorrow, confession, and self-abasement be the fruit of our investigation, and let us humble ourselves before God for this native condition and this actual guilt. Justly ought we to be amazed at the patience and grace of the covenant mercy of the Lord: no subject is calculated more powerfully to reveal the surprising compassions that dwell in our God; and when we view them acting towards our own

obstinate, malicious, and infatuated hearts, we may indeed exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that passest by transgression!" But we must not be satisfied with God's *forbearing* compassion alone, for this is extended long to such as perish at last; something more is necessary in order to secure us for eternity, and we should seek the application of His recovering power. We must have His reconciling Spirit dwelling in us, if we are delivered eternally, and for this we should express our humble supplication.

Counsel also should be received through this subject to such as are possessed of the privilege of peace with God. Let not the regenerate soul imagine, that by regeneration an end is put to the expression of native enmity; let evidences of the falls and infirmities of believers, and experience of the lustings of the "flesh against the Spirit" in our own hearts, teach us wisdom, and put us upon our guard against the strivings of the old nature that is in us. We have in all such cases cause for continual watchings and prayer, lest at any time we should stumble and fall, through the sin that dwelleth in us; and the words, which Jesus addressed to his regenerate disciples, are sufficiently expressive and directive of our faith, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And may we all use our experience of the nature of the warfare here below, to quicken our desires after that place of rest that is prepared for the saints above, where the evils that are consequent upon the fall of man will be forever and fully done away, and we who "have borne the image of the earthy," and so have been at enmity with God, shall "bear the image of the heavenly," and so be eternally lovers of that divine glory, in which we find our heaven and possess eternal peace.

Prove that human nature, as fallen and depraved, is enmity against God.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. And see Rom. i. 28—30. Job xxi. 14, 15. xxii. 17. Jer. ii. 11. John xv. 18.

Is this a disposition that is unprovoked by the Almighty?

"O generation, see ye the word of the Lord. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, we are lords, we will come no more unto Thee." Jer. ii. 31. And see Gen. i. 29. Mic. vii. 18.

Is it foreign to the original condition and proper state of the creature?

"God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." Gen. i. 27. And see Eccl. vii. 29.

Does it arise out of a dissimilarity of nature, inclination, and taste?

"How much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water!" Job xv. 16. And see Tit. iii. 3.

Does it arise out of similarity of nature, inclination, and taste, with the devil?

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John viii. 44. And see Eph. ii. 2, 3.

Is this the state of all men, or are all men naturally *carnal*, and so at enmity?

"Are ye not carnal, and walk as *men*?" 1 Cor. iii. 3. And see Rom. vii. 14.

Is this enmity demonstrated by correspondent confederacy with God's enemies?

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." Eph. ii. 2. And see Rom. iv. 4.

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh."—"They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. viii. 5. 8.

"In whom *the god of this world* hath blinded the mind." 2 Cor. iv. 4.

Does native enmity against God rage with increased fury by reason of restraint?

"Sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Rom. vii. 8.

Is it demonstrated by resistance of overtures, manifestations of God's mercy, experience, &c.?

"Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." John vii. 7.

"This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." John iii. 19. And see Luke xix. 14. Prov. i. 23—25. Zech. vii. 11, 12.

Does this disposition demonstrate itself in resistance of the life of grace in the regenerate heart?

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." Gal. v. 17. And see Rom. vii. 21.

What does this state lead to in the eternal world?

"All they that hate me love *death*." Prov. viii. 36. And see Psalm xxi. 8, 9.

LOVE TO GOD.

We have contemplated the awful condition of sinful man as the *enemy* of God, we have now to inquire into the affections of his soul as *reconciled*, and brought to love the object whom once he hated. We must not confound this subject, with a former statement of *faith* in God. Love is an attendant upon true faith, but is also a distinct fruit of the Holy Spirit, and has many interesting and important particulars, necessary to be understood by those, who desire a clear perception into the comprehensive character of spiritual existence.

Love, in its proper signification, is a disposition to approve, appreciate, and delight in the object to whom it is directed. To the creature it has different degrees, according to the nature of the relative tie, or according to the attraction or excellence that is contemplated: but when love is directed to God, the supreme and glorious Object where all attraction and excellence centre, it admits of no degrees. In Him all things exist which can satisfy the heart of man; and

when the heart is drawn to Him, as the place of rest, it finds sufficient on which to repose; and with a holy recumbency of faith and contentment concludes that here, and here alone, is the portion that can satisfy the soul. In this blessed grace there is so much of peculiar excellence, that we must investigate its nature, not supposing that the love of the soul to God is a mere excitement of passion, or a wild enthusiasm of the soul, or an untaught exercise of the imagination. There is a state of mind, known and exhibited by some persons, which is mistaken for the genuine exercise of divine love, and through which self-delusion is practised, and the cause of truth is blasphemed. We are in consequence called upon to be precise in our statements, and in our views, when we speak upon the peculiar experience of those who are "taught of God," and it should be understood, that the love of God is a reasonable, solid, well founded affection of the soul, and not the wild rapture of a fanatic, or the blind confidence of an ignorant and deceived mind.

The origin of this love is the love of God to the soul. We have no disposition to this centre of attraction, until the Lord is pleased freely to draw near, and by the Omnipotence of His own love and power to remove from us the enmity which rests in the natural heart. We have already seen how determinately the sinner stops his ears and hardens his heart against over-

tures, manifestations, and experience, and that on his part there is no prospect of obtaining even a desire for conditions of peace: but God, who is rich in mercy, has resolved upon a method by which the sinner's obduracy shall be subdued; and in His own sovereignty He enters the region of death, and maketh the sinner willing in the day of His power. The efficacious purpose is applied in a way that accords with the excellency of the Divine Nature, and with the condition of man as a rational creature; and although the whole of the persuasive power of the means used is from the accompanying influence of the Holy Ghost, such *motives* are placed before the sinner as affect his mind, and win upon his affections.

These motives are three,—the excellency of the Object revealed—the glory of the work through which this Object is revealed—and the sense of personal interest in the revelation. In order to effect this persuasion, the Lord breaks from the thick cloud, in which He is enveloped, and shines forth, in unveiled glory, upon a mind already prepared by the Spirit for the discovery. He shows His own greatness, His holiness, His truth, and all those excellent perfections which form the divine nature and name; and along with this manifestation, He operates upon the mind, arresting it with the vision, and filling it with amazement and admiration of the Most High. The terrors that would naturally attend

this revelation, are removed by the medium through which the discovery is communicated. God is not to be seen by man but as He is made known in the work of redemption, and therefore when the sinner thus contemplates the glory of Jehovah, he does so as He proclaims His name in the Person of the incarnate Saviour. In Jesus Christ he beholds the wonderful and eternal God: through the work of life in Him, he is enabled to look upon the uncreated majesty: and when the beams of glory thus shine in their tempered rays, and come forth upon the soul through Bethlehem, and Calvary, and the tomb, the force of the attraction is marvellous, and the whole soul is overwhelmed by the endearing demonstration of God's love to man! When, in addition to these discoveries, the sinner's anxiety after personal safety is relieved, by a persuasion of personal interest in redemption, the attraction is rendered complete; gratitude, wonder, and praise fill the soul; and the heart feeling and owning the sway of divine authority, thus commended and enforced, falls prostrate before God a surrendered and willing captive to His grace. Thus divine love, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, rests upon a solid foundation: it is effected by the Lord Himself, as a feature belonging to the new creature in Christ; and it arises out of a divine revelation made to a sanctified understanding, accompanied with a strong seizure of the affections of the

oul, by the power of God's all-conquering pur-
ose; and wherever it exists, it contains in it
hat is necessary to the genuine affection of
ve; it approves, it appreciates, it delights in
he Object loved, and it rests in satisfaction by
n appropriating act of faith, through which a
nion sincere and lasting ensues.

Love to God will be *demonstrated.* This is
n affection that cannot be shut up, and con-
ealed from the observation of others; the in-
ternal flame burns bright and vehemently, purifying the inward man, and consuming the corruptions of nature; but it also breaks forth into visible evidences, which are decisive and unquestionable, proclaiming the conquest that the Spirit has obtained, and showing forth the praises of the Almighty Deliverer.

The former confederacy with God's enemies will be broken; love dictates the necessity of professing, that they, who are opposed to the divine glory, can no longer be admitted into friendship and association with the new creature. The world is "not of God"—therefore it is not of the believer; he cannot, he will not, conspire with this adversary against the holiness of Jehovah; and he is constrained, by the new principle in his heart, openly to avow, that he leaves the world, and has renounced its fellowship and spirit. Many are the difficulties which are consequent upon this profession: he has to encounter ridicule, scorn, and contempt: he

has to meet persecution, calumny, and the misrepresentation of his feelings and views; he has, in some instances, to relinquish preferment, honour, and gain: nevertheless, those things which *were* gain to him, he *now* counts *loss* for Christ; and with a heart, glowing with love to the Saviour, he counts it not hard to tread the steps of Him whom he loves, and is willing and desirous to be as He was in this world.

But the world is not the only adversary to God, from whom he must separate: he carries within him a traitorous nature, that solicits to indulgence of the flesh, and pleads for present ease: to these solicitations he turns a deaf ear, he knows that they are the accursed enemies and murderers of the Lord, that the lusts of the flesh are in direct opposition to the pure reign and dominion of Jesus, and that to listen to these would be to grieve the Holy Spirit, and to crucify the Son of God afresh. *Love* forbids such treachery, and urges him to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts; he obeys the precept, and learns to die daily, delighting to bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus, and to be made conformable to Him.

He is heartily on the side of God, as it respects the conflict with satan in his own heart: he diligently endeavours to establish Christ's universal sway, seeking to displace the usurper from his seat, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. In this

painful work, love is perpetually animating, cheering, and giving new excitement to the soul, and is the instrument through which, again and again, the believer rises to conflict with the enemy, and resolves upon renewing the warfare, whatever may be the difficulty or danger of the way. Love carries out the interests of the soul beyond the personal concerns for eternity; it desires the establishment of Christ's glory in the earth, and looks to the spread of the gospel, the victory of the word, and the downfall of Satan, with earnest and heartfelt desire, praying unfeignedly, "Thy kingdom come," and accompanying prayer with zealous labours to promote this great and universal reign.

It will follow from such a resolved separation from the enemies of God, that the heart will seek its delight in new pursuits, a new service, and new fellowship. The commandment is not grievous but joyous. Love fills the soul with liberty, and obedience is considered a *privilege*, and one of the peculiar *dignities* of the creature of God. This precious grace is therefore fruitful in all good works, and abounds in the productions that mark the Christian character. It prompts to diligence, it strengthens to perseverance, it animates to sufferings for the Lord's sake, it sweetens care and sorrow, and sooths in pains and bereavements, and by leading the soul into fellowship with the Saviour

it is instrumentally the means of preserving from evil, and of perfecting the believer in all good: the love of Christ constrains him, and the delight of the presence of Christ, renders his burden light and his yoke easy. The overtures, manifestations, and experiences which attend his pilgrimage, so far from being resisted, are now gratefully accepted, as so many new rivets to the affections that entwine round his Saviour; he loves Him the more in proportion to the demonstrations he receives of His watchful care and guardianship. His voice of counsel, or reproof, is hearkened unto with gratitude, for the tenderness and truth which are displayed, and every experience of personal weakness, or of human vicissitude, serves to strengthen the bond to Christ, and to increase the simplicity of heavenly love.

Thus we perceive, how the divine grace of love to God acts in direct opposition to the natural corruption of enmity against Him, and that it is God's gift to a sinner for the purpose of bringing him back to his proper existence: it replaces him in the condition from whence he fell in Adam, and it reinstates him in privileges of experience which have been forfeited by his sins; and it invests him, also, with an additional benefit to any that could have been possessed by the first covenant, for since the gift is by the covenant *in Christ*, it is rendered

irreversible, and ensures that this love shall never die. This is a consideration which gladdens the experienced heart. Knowing, as the believer does, how many are the floods that come against him, and that would extinguish the fire in his breast, it is joyful for him to be assured, that the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against every adversary, and that no force shall be able to destroy a principle which God has thus imparted in Christ. The history of the believer forms a confirming comment upon this truth. Innumerable are the occasions wherein he experiences the danger to which his affections lie exposed. The world is a chilling atmosphere, the vehemence of natural desires sometimes burns intensely, the subtlety and strength of Satan are frequently put forth desperately against him, and he is made to feel, that were not the love which he bears to his Saviour, under divine keeping, it must perish from his soul: he therefore magnifies the Lord for the faithfulness with which he continues to pour in the oil of the Spirit, and he keeps his eyes ever unto Him, by and in whom alone he maintains his supernatural existence.

We should give these subjects an entrance into our hearts, as the touchstone, which may serve to discover, how far we are interested in the Lord's redemption. As we can decidedly prove that we are in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, by nature, so ought we to be

able as decidedly to prove that we are in the spirit of love and liberty, by the salvation that is in Christ. This we are able to do, if we really possess the renewing of the Holy Ghost, for no man can have passed from death to life, or have experienced the wonderful reverse, of love to God in place of enmity, without such decisive evidence of a new existence, as will satisfy his solicitude upon this point. The manifestation of this privilege will serve to ascertain its existence. Therefore we should do well to look to the fruit that we bear, and see that we have taken the consistent stand of subjects, and servants, of the Most High, living in open and resolved opposition to all that is opposed to Him. It is by this standard that we shall be finally examined, and judged, and then the Lord will confirm his own word, "He that is not with me is against me," and prove to all men, that He will reject the cry of "Lord, Lord," unless it has been attended with obedience to the things which he has enjoined.

Let those, in whom the unspeakable privilege of conscious love to God abounds, rejoice in the mercy of the everlasting God. Such a disposition is attended with present peace, and leads to future glory; it should therefore be a subject of gratitude from day to day. But let the spirit be called into constant energy, the *joy* of the possession may otherwise be greatly depressed. It is not enough that we truly love God, we

must be putting that love to the constant exhibition of its life, either in the way of public relative labour, or in the exercise of secret acts of faith and fellowship. And here lies one of the most important parts of the Christian life, for we are naturally disposed to indolence, and in too many instances live exceedingly below the experience which belongs properly to union with God, hence we are put upon stirring up the spiritual gift that is in us, and are bid to be continually trimming our lamps, and watchful against a disposition to settle on our lees. Upon this part of the duty of a believer, we shall have opportunity to observe more largely in a future subject: at present we may rest upon what has been proposed, and endeavour to assist the mind, and heart, in their further exercises of meditation and prayer, by gathering proofs out of God's word upon the truth of what has been here affirmed.

Can we prove that there is such a disposition in the heart of a sinner, as love to God?

"I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." Psalm xviii. 1. See also Psalm lxxxvii. 7. cxvi. 7. Cant. v. 16.

Is it evident that this disposition proceeds from an act of free grace on God's part?

"We love him because he first loved us."

Should it not be stirred up into exercise, and vigilantly guarded against adversaries to its life?

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude 21. See also 1 Thess. v. 8. Gal. v. 6.

LUKEWARMNESS.

THE sin of lukewarmness is of so awful a character, that an investigation of its nature, and of the causes by which it is produced, should be extremely important in our eyes. Were it confined to unregenerate men, we should have sufficient reason to feel it a momentous inquiry, but its baneful influence extends itself to those who are privileged by a higher and spiritual existence, and therefore it is doubly important that we should all be aware of its insidious operations.

Lukewarmness is a term which describes a state of indifference, coldness, or apathy of mind and heart; it evinces that the subject upon which it acts is not considered of sufficient importance to engage much vehemence, or energy of desire and feeling, and bespeaks a depressed state of the affections in that particular. In interests that are of this life, it is considered a decided testimony of want of real love, or the true embracing of a cause, and is usually disgusting to men, and dishonourable to the lukewarm. That

such a state of soul should exist in the interests that are eternal is truly lamentable, and should appear equally loathsome in our eyes, especially when we call to mind the severe testimony of Christ against a soul thus defiled, "I would thou wert cold or hot,—so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Rev. iii. 15, 16.

It is not to appear out of character, that such a condition should in any degree belong to unregenerate men: it is true they are, generally speaking, utterly cold, and lay in the icy region where no genial beam is felt or appreciated, but there are instances wherein a degree of regard to religion is professed by the unsanctified, and where there is an apparent attention to some of its sacred demands: it is in these instances that we shall discover the lukewarmness that belongs to an unregenerate state.

There are certain great truths which belong to the first principles of Christianity, in the apprehension of which they are defective: the misery and guilt of the soul, which it is necessary that a man feel and groan under, are not subjects of affliction or pressure upon such a heart; on the contrary, although there is a general acknowledgment of the fact, it is manifest that there is no correspondent humiliation, and it is frequently declared by such a man that he considers it sufficient to admit a *moderate* degree of conviction, and to unite in the general

confessions that are due from fallen creatures that he along with all others is a sinner. The manifestation of God's grace in the salvation of sinners is contemplated with equal indifference; it is considered as a provision made for man by a kind of necessity belonging to the goodness of God, and is received as an act of his mercy which they are inclined to suppose He could not do otherwise than extend, and which they are ready to conclude could not have been withheld without involving the glory of the divine name, and darkening its lustre; hence, although it is acknowledged that some tribute is due to God for the gift of a Saviour, it is offered with mere *general* thanksgiving, there is no admiration of the wonder and mystery of redemption, and no sense of the terrors from which redemption rescues the soul.

It will follow of course, that the ministry of the word is received with equal indifference; it is taken as a matter of importance so far as it belongs to the regular institutions, which they profess to admire and accept; it is right and orderly that such services should be established and observed; but there are no worthy thoughts of the excellent grace, which furnishes men for the work of the ministry, or of that divine presence of the Holy Ghost, by whom the message is made an effectual embassy from heaven. In many instances, the truths which are proclaimed are scarcely heard; if heard, they are frequently

doubted, or rejected, as not essential to salvation; or, if received, it is too often into an unsanctified mind, which turns the grace of God into licentiousness, and exhibits a loose and scandalous course of life. With such men the spread of the Gospel is not considered with any interest, they are surprised and even disgusted at the zeal and warmth of the more devoted, they consider it enough to care moderately for self, and enthusiastic and wild to attempt the conversion of others; or, if indeed it is necessary that the Jew and the Heathen become objects of regard, they conclude that a few Christians, having leisure, and money, and influence, within their reach, may be deemed an adequate provision for these objects, without troubling the whole world with the claim.

Wherever these principles prevail, there is decidedly the condition of lukewarmness, and that of an awful description, for it belongs to a heart unacquainted with the *power* of religion, and destitute of any bond or tie to the Saviour, and His cause.

The sin assumes a more frightful expression when appearing in the regenerate, because these have so many reasons for the lively devotion of their souls. Alas! the children of God are not always under those corresponding influences of grace, which should keep them alive to their obligations; and, notwithstanding their privileges and their experience, they can sometimes

feel and live as if they were under the same low conceptions of revelation as the unregenerate. They are capable of falling into forgetfulness of the pit from whence they have been digged, and of the ruin of the soul which once they so deeply deplored. There was a time, when they contemplated the edge of that precipice on which they stood, with amazement and horror—they looked upon their miserable condition with affecting conviction of its extent, and believed that none of the varied figures by which it is represented in the Scriptures exceeded the personal ruin which they bewailed; unclean, and fallen, and beggared, and blind, and mad, and infatuated, and lost, and undone, were terms which well applied to their wretchedness, and which they were wont to use in earnest confessions before God, and unfeigned affliction of soul; but now they have almost lost sight of the season of distress, and if they ever take a retrospective view of the past, it is with very disproportionate feelings of sorrow or shame. It is true, the child of God is brought by the Gospel into liberty and peace, nor is it needful that he should always be grieving and bemoaning his fall, the Lord delights in the cheerful affiance of faith, and loves the confidence that pardon and justification produce in the believing soul; yet, so far from this liberty proving the destruction of self-loathing, it will increase it more and more; and in proportion to the spirituality of

the discernment, and the joy of present adoption, the recollection of former darkness and apostacy should be a subject of strong emotion;—when it ceases to be so, *lukewarmness* is the cause.

The lukewarmness which prevails in this instance, will also spread its influence to other branches of the Christian doctrine: it will necessarily follow, that where there is a depression in the sense of native ruin, there will be also in the sense of the grace of redemption. Once the subject of salvation by Christ was an enrapturing theme, filling the mind with wonder, and raising in the heart the warmest exercise of grateful love: that this mercy should have been extended to such a sinner was an overwhelming consideration, and that Jesus should bleed and die and bear the weight of imputed guilt, such as his, was a truth which, whilst it supplied him with ardent joy in his God, filled him with tender remorse. Strangely has he lost these emotions: though grateful and sensible of mercy and goodness to his soul, he does not experience the lively fervor he once possessed: too often his tributes seem to arise more from the power of an enlightened judgment, than from the fire of divine love in the heart, and he is capable of passing hours and days with scarcely a recollection of those great considerations, which once were never absent from his thoughts. Alas! he has degenerated into lukewarmness.

Possibly there is not a visible declension in attendance on the means of grace, but where lukewarmness prevails there will be an inward decrease of delight in hearing: the customary occasions of frequenting places of worship will be observed from a sense of duty, and because the heart cannot be at rest without this expression of affiance to God, nevertheless, the mind is full of wanderings, the word has lost much of its power, the soul returns unrefreshed, and sometimes, were it not for the sense of consistency, the temptation to absent from such scenes, and to accept excuses for staying at home, would prevail. A lukewarm state of affections has rendered the appetite sickly, and the spirit has lost its ardour in hearing the word.

The same disposition will be felt towards the cause of Christ in the earth; once it was the fervent desire of the soul to promote the knowledge of Jesus amongst all men; friends and acquaintance were warned, invited, and counseled; the poor, the young, and the ignorant, received unwearied attention; every effort was made for the propagation of the Gospel to Jew and Gentile; and the flame of sacred devotion burned with a hallowing fire which purified from self, and carnal reasonings, exciting to spend and be spent for the Lord; but now the heart is grown indifferent to these interests, or is slow to awake and own their voice, it is enough if others will work, for itself ease and indulgence

to the flesh seem more desirable. Thus lukewarmness chills all the best affections of the soul, and the believer whilst under its influence seems to be verging back again to former alienation from God, and to be awfully numbered with the dead-hearted professor.

We need scarcely to declare, that this sin, whether contemplated in the unregenerate or the regenerate, will have unquestionable marks. There is a difference in the *inward* state, for a regenerate man can never fall again into the distance of the spiritually dead, neither have the unconverted any acquaintance with those motives and affections which influence the children of God; nevertheless, the outward demonstration of lukewarmness is the same in both, although different in degree. It is discovered by a visible *independence* of Spirit, leading to great negligence: it will be manifest that duties are discharged in a slovenly way, the Scriptures are read carelessly, the ordinances are attended with lightness of deportment, the knee is bent in evident formality, closet duties are neglected, family worship is performed irreverently, excuses are readily formed and accepted against any of these obligations, and it is conspicuous that the same impelling motives which were once powerful no longer exist, or, that motives which are spiritual never have existed.

This state will be perceptible also by the fatal

propensity to unite with worldly society. With the unregenerate this has never been considered out of character, and therefore in this respect there is no *change* observable: but with the regenerate separation from the world is invariably the consequence of true and upright profession: God has required it, and their new nature constrains to it, for there is nothing in the principles, conversation, and pursuit of the worldling, that can accord with the heavenly affections of the saint. When these affections however are depressed, the atmosphere of the world is no more oppressive; and it is common to observe the lukewarm, traversing those scenes which once he renounced, and busy in the haunts of pleasure, or in the society of men of this world, without any *apparent* difference of taste or feeling. The susceptibility of the conscience seems gone; the idle joke, the unprofitable converse, and even the blasphemous exclamation, do not shock and disgust the soul as once they did; and if any excitement of the heart is felt on such occasions, it is but a transient emotion, and a smothered, or neglected, remonstrance of the new man, which is soon silenced by the louder current of natural feeling.

The extent of this evil in the regenerate is fearfully betrayed, in reference to those relative obligations which are now all on the decline, for not only is the heart indifferent to works of love,

profession. Eccles. vii. 16. Jer. xlviii. 11. John xii. 42, 43.

The origin of this offence in the children of God is not the same as it respects the state of the affections, for these being once reconciled to God can never relapse into that of enmity: whatever may be the degree of declension, or the wretchedness of backsliding, to which the soul may fall, it never ceases to love the Saviour: the principle is there, notwithstanding its depression, and still the divine perfections are estimated, and the demands of the Lord are acknowledged to be right and equitable in their most spiritual extent. We must, therefore, look for the rise of lukewarmness to some other source. Cant. v. 2—5.

Sometimes it springs from fear of man: the mind has admitted some undue apprehensions of the power, authority, or dispositions of the creature to oppress, to injure, or afflict: dread of persecution and shame, have induced the concealment of the love and faith of the soul; and the divine life has been placed under certain restraints, and been brought to make certain accommodations to the opinions of men, by which means the Spirit has been grieved; and the dispositions of a coward have generated such evils, as are justly chastened by the withdrawment of the Lord's vigorous witness, and with the just punishment of a lukewarm and depressed experience. Prov. xxix. 25.

Or it may be induced by the unwary allowance of worldly connexions and association, when the affections have been betrayed either into creaturely desires; or when ungodly society has been entered into presumptuously and without fear; or when unprofitable professors, men who talk high of religion, and whose practice and experience are low, are the constant companions that are selected or admitted: these things may at first be burdensome to the mind, but if not resisted will soon infect the soul with similar disease; and, in consequence of breathing this pestilential air, the spiritual life will sicken and languish, and many times seem ready to expire. 2 Chron. xix. 2.

An incautious entrance into too much worldly business will produce the same evil: when a man is not contented with a humble or moderate station in this life, but will load himself with the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, he becomes busy, troubled about many things, anxious respecting his temporal circumstances, and at length plunged into a sea of what he calls necessary attention to his worldly concerns;—necessary, in truth, they are become, if he will succeed in his devices and schemes; but it is a necessity which is obeyed at the expense of his spiritual prosperity, and the energy of his holy desires is destroyed by reason of his inordinate pursuit of the gains of this world. 1 Tim. vi. 8—10.

When all external circumstances are smooth and easy, a man is in danger of falling into spiritual lukewarmness, from the propensity of nature to delight in present rest; and many times there needs no other means to prove this monstrous tendency of the heart, than the *bounties* and *goodness* of God. Presently the unwary soul begins to whisper, "peace, peace," and to act as if resolved upon taking full draughts of what prosperity can yield; and he who was fervent and strong in the Lord, when under affliction, or when in comparatively dependent circumstances, presently loses his distinction by the prosperous events of his life. Hos. xiii. 6. Deut. xxxii. 15.

Lukewarmness may arise from the secret indulgence of some bosom sin: when the native, or constitutional corruption, instead of being constantly mortified, is allowed to plead for gratification, and the soul is disposed to connive at its indulgence, by this sin the Lord is dishonoured, idols are admitted where He only should reign, and the *integrity* of the heart is defiled and corrupted: it will necessarily follow, that the most fatal degree of lukewarmness is produced through this evil; because there is a certain consciousness of treachery in the heart, which holds a man back, whilst in these circumstances, from prayer, reading, and communion: he is not disposed to crucify his darling idol, but he has not effrontery enough to enter with

his usual confidence into the divine presence; and thus, by stifling conviction, and abstaining from the means which God has ordained for his recovery, he falls into the awful snare, and his affections grow languid and cold to the Lord. 2 Sam. xi. 27.

When a man is tempted to hearken to the vain philosophy, either of his own mind, or of the vain teachers who may propose the schemes and arguments of human pride, instead of the simple testimony of God's word, he will rapidly fall into lukewarmness of heart; he leaves the narrow way where Jesus leads and instructs His followers, to wander in the wide field of speculation and human conceit; and having turned away from the guide of his soul, he wanders into darkness, and must consequently experience the miserable effect of having the beams of the sun withdrawn. The Lord has a determined resistance of the proud devices of the vain philosophy of this world, when applied to the study of things that are only supernaturally revealed; and never will the Spirit afford his genial influenee in this cold and deathly region. 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.

Sometimes lukewarmness is produced through an unfaithful ministry: the hearer has not been sufficiently alive to the difference of the pure testimony of Jesus crucified, and those low conceptions of truth that are proclaimed by some men, and having yielded his attention with-

out accompanying discrimination and prayer, he has relapsed from that state of discernment which he once enjoyed, and partakes of the same spirit as is prevalent in his minister and guide. The fault is in himself; the circumstance of sitting under a ministry that is devoid of awakening or solid powers, will not *necessarily* produce lukewarmness in a Christian hearer; it ought, on the contrary, to stir him up to a still greater exercise of his peculiar privileges, putting him upon prayer, reading, and labour, that should stem this torrent of evil; and when he yields himself to the influence and is corrupted thereby, he is guilty of a breach in his faith, and of inconsistency with the privileges, which no *outward* circumstances can affect. Jer. vi. 14. v. 31.

In the conclusion of this subject, let us endeavour to realize the nature of the provocation that is offered to God by the sin. If it exists in the unregenerate professor, it is alarming in its consequences, inasmuch as it demonstrates a condition of soul that cannot rest finally with God. God must reject the unmeaning services that have been offered, and pour contempt upon the *name* to live, with which the sinner has deluded himself. And let such an one consider, that his very profession increases the measure of his guilt,—since it argues that there is a *degree* of conviction that God is worthy to be

feared. If he is worthy of *any* thing, He is worthy of *all;* and to have some discoveries of the divine authority, and no discernment or affection to appreciate the glorious God, betrays a degree of native enmity to the true nature of Jehovah, that must be highly offensive to Him; it must end in the destruction of the soul for ever. If it exists in the children of his grace, it must ever be followed by punishment of a grievous kind: the Lord will not connive at our sin, nor suffer this inconsistency in the child of his love: and, although He will not utterly forsake his own, He will dispense such corrections, as are bitter and afflictive to the renewed mind. Tribulations, full of the expression of his displeasure shall arise: distress, bereavement, disgrace, disappointment, loss, shall come upon the perverse way, and the heart shall be taught that it has followed after vanity, and pursued its own wretchedness. And were there none of these consequences attendant upon such a state, surely it is enough to arouse and alarm the believer, when he calls to mind those spiritual evils which his sin will induce: for a state of lukewarmness is followed by the loss of assurance, by a backsliding and unequal walk, by loss of privileges, by dishonour done to God's blessed name, by offences through which sinners are injured,—and possibly eternally lost,—and the saints are wounded and exposed to more grievous reproach. The sanctified mind, that

dwells upon these awful results, will perceive that it is no unimportant thing—that a disposition so evil should be vigilantly resisted and guarded against—and animated by that love to the Saviour, and to souls, that must ever be the innate possession of a renewed heart, will be excited, possibly at this moment, to arise and trim the lamp, and to look well that there are none of these roots of bitterness concealed within the breast.

Can we prove from the scripture, that men destitute of regenerating grace can profess an interest in the subject of religion?

"I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead." Rev. iii. 1. See also Matt. xxv. 1; iii. 8.

Have such professors low and cold apprehensions of their own misery and need?

"Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Rev. iii. 17.

Are they consequently destitute of lively views of the grace of redemption?

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Isa. liii. 1.

Do such professors receive the ministry of the word without due reverence and estimation of its character and design?

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear." Jude 12.

Is the disposition of lukewarmness attended with want of zeal in Christ's cause?

"And another of his disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Matt. viii. 21.

Is it possible for a regenerate man to fall into this sin?

"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love: remember from whence thou art fallen." Rev. ii. 4, 5.

Do they relapse into a state of forgetfulness of the sins from which they have been rescued?

"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." 2 Pet. i. 9.

"Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked, and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood." Ezek. xvi. 22.

Do they grow cold to their Deliverer?

"Of the Rock that begat thee thou art un-

mindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." Deut. xxxii. 18.

Do they relax in zeal for hearing, or in faith and obedience to the word?

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? Gal. v. 7.

Is it possible for the regenerate to relax in the works of charity, &c.?"

"Repent, and do the first works." Rev. ii. 5.

Is it the duty of all professors to guard against the danger of this state of declension?

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily." Heb. iii. 12, 13.

DEVOTION.

THE grace of *Devotion* to God is not to be confounded with *Love*: it is possible for a heart to possess affection or love to an object, without a high degree of fervour, and it is evident that in natural things we make this distinction. When a man is exceedingly absorbed in the object possessing his affections, we do not merely say that he loves or appreciates, but we describe the entireness of his feeling, by saying he is *devoted* to it. Thus it is said such a man is a very *devoted* lover, or such a man is *devoted* to his favourite pursuit. Love is the spring or motive which actuates him towards the object, but devotion is the consequence of a complete dedication. In divine interests, devotion signifies such a love to God, as is attended with a fervent and a regular consecration of the whole man to His service: the call to follow Him is cheerfully accepted, and the vocation entered into admits of no rival to the sole possession of the heart, and no relaxation in the diligent pursuit of His

will. If we examine our own sentiments upon this question, we shall find that we are in the habit of making a distinction in the degree of a Christian's service, and of marking this distinction by the term *Devotion*. All believers are uprightly given to the Lord, if they are interested in his regenerating grace; for it is the necessary consequence of conversion, to fix a man in God with faith and love: but all believers are not equally given up, in a spirit of fervour and simplicity, and therefore we say of such as are, they are very *devoted*, or they have *devoted* themselves, or such an one is an exceedingly *devoted* Christian. It remains for us to inquire into this excellent disposition, as contrasted with the evil of lukewarmness, and to endeavour after such a view of the state as may awaken increased desire to make it our own.

Devotion consists of what is internal and external. Internally the whole man is embued with a lively sense of the debt of love. Externally the whole man is visibly constrained to unremitting service in the labour of love.

The sense of debt arises from clear perceptions of the vast undertaking, by which God has redeemed the soul; the thoughts are perpetually turned upon the Christian theme; and God's mercy, in extending the benefit of salvation to such a soul, is the powerful recollection that is never absent from the mind. In this re-

flection, the Spirit gives the opened view of the state of misery and alienation, from which the covenant has brought home the wanderer; and continually contrasts the privileges, which as a child he is permitted to realize. This understanding of God's compassions does not merely awaken gratitude, but it kindles a correspondent flame, and raises the heart to returns of earnest love. There is nothing belonging to the divine economy, which does not afford him a subject of wonder and praise; and in reference to what the Lord has arranged for himself, the devoted man finds an unceasing spring of new excitement to his soul. In this divine arrangement of his interests, he embraces the whole of what respects his outward circumstances and his inward exercises, in all which he reads a *call*, for which he feels gratitude, and to which he answers by the sacrifice of a heart that owns no other Lord, and hopes for and desires no other portion.

The constrained surrender of the outward man arises from the earnest desire of glorifying Him, from whom so many benefits have been received; he admits the just demand which the Lord has upon him, not only in love and in gratitude, but in the ardour of a heart that would fain leave nothing unaccomplished, by which the kingdom and honour of Christ may be promoted, either personally or relatively; and in consequence of this affection, he no longer

considers his body, or his mind, or his influence, advantageous, but as he may in some way magnify his God, through these instruments. They are *devoted*, and God is invited to demand or to use them, that the surrender may be visibly known, and that he may be privileged to say, "They glorified God in me."

The evidence of this inward devotion is thus rendered complete and visible: the exhortation addressed to Timothy, "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all," is received in personal application, and followed by a diligent cultivation of the mind, to which study, hearing, discipline, are resolutely applied for the purpose of answering to the demand which God has upon his redeemed. The understanding is *devoted;* consequently, the subject upon which it seeks to be informed and invigorated, is the revelation of God himself. The memory is *devoted;* consequently, the records that are written there all savour of Jesus, and are faithful to the wonders of divine grace. The imagination is *devoted;* its glowing fervours and its lively energy are of course sacred to the Lord, and its excursive flights are all directed by impelling love to God. Affections are *devoted;* the strong current of feeling is therefore turned into the channel of redeeming love, and under the power of this simplicity, the believer is ever pressing to a condition which shall verify in him

the truth of the figure used to describe the believer's existence, he would "mount like the eagle," and with the strong wings of faith and love soar to the vision of his God, dwell in the beam of everlasting glory, and gaze on the manifestation of Jehovah. With such inward consecration, the outward service becomes habitual and unquestionable: labours are undertaken as so many *privileges*; the possession of life itself being valuable in proportion to the opportunities afforded for usefulness, these occasions will be *sought* and improved, and the life will be a rich exhibition of the mind and life of Jesus, being replenished with the beauties of the new creation, and vigorous in the fruits of self-denial.

In these respects the disposition will act in concert with love and gratitude, proving a precious adornment to both, and investing the soul with the most unutterable privileges, both in private and public duties, so that it receives its own reward; and he who thus consecrates himself to the glory of his Lord, finds in that Lord ample and free returns of what He alone can give.

There are some attendants upon devotion, which peculiarly belong to the *experience*, and through which we also may be enabled to discover where it exists. We must therefore look into the movements of the heart, in those occasions where devotion will be conspicuous, and

by this means strive to determine our own share in the distinction.

Devotion will be enriched by an inward alacrity to see the Lord's will or pleasure, even when only *intimated*: a sluggish mind has to be roused to observation, a lukewarm heart is reluctant to read the divine requirement, but one *devoted* is accustomed to "look after God," and being in the habit of asking, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do," is equally in the habit of exercising a prompt interpretation of His providences or His word. It does not end here: what is perceived is accepted; for the devotion of such a soul leads into complacent delight in whatever may be the wise appointment of Him whom he supremely loves, although in some instances it awakens the passing pang of nature, and may require an effort to overcome the voice of the flesh: there can be no abiding hesitation, devotion silences the reasoning of nature, and rising into its true energy is ready to exclaim, "I will not sacrifice to God of that which costeth me nothing."

Devotion will be evidenced, when there is a holy fear of the withdrawment of the Lord's manifestation: it is ever solicitous to preserve an inward witness, strong and clear, of the soul's acceptance and peace with God: this arises not only from a conviction of the *need* of His support and presence, but from a restless desire of the light of His countenance, as that

which alone can truly cheer, and without which the dearest earthly comforts would cease to give delight. Where God is not sensibly felt, giving His fellowship to the soul, there is a painful void too miserable to be endured: the devoted heart dreads it more than any other evil, and anxiously guards against the visitation. If there is the least suspicion crossing the mind, that all is not as it ought to be between God and the soul, alarm seizes the affections, and the cause of the passing distrust is examined. Such an one well knows, that whenever the hidings of God's face are endured, there must be some cause which ought to be removed; and no repose is given to the spirit, until it has made diligent search, discovered the evil, and brought it to be sacrificed to the Lord.

In the midst of the warmest devotion, however, there will always be a consciousness of defect in the degree of love, when compared with the motives by which it ought to be awakened; and devotion thus proves its own life, by putting the soul upon self-displeasure, on account of not being more ardently consecrated. Every defect, every wandering imagination, every impediment raised by nature against the simplicity of the soul, is a heavy burden and grief; and many times the devoted believer is found reproving himself for his want of devotion, and ready to abhor himself for that small proportion of fervour which he gives, in

a cause that he feels and owns supremely excellent, and worthy to be the only subject of interest.

Opportunities frequently occur, wherein devotion will be exemplified in its true character. Whilst the believer lives in a world such as this, the cause of Christ is frequently dishonoured by the inconsistency of professors, and by the slanders of an ungodly world: this will occasion unfeigned grief to a devoted heart: it will be an affliction, that any who take up the name of Jesus should act without reverence of that name, and that it should be possible for miserable sinners to abuse the doctrines of grace: the evil is fully apprehended as it respects the souls of men, and although the calumny thrown upon Christ and his true disciples will be but transitory, he cannot be insensible to the dishonour which for a season arises from these offences. When contemplating the enmity shown by the ungodly against the glorious Son of God, and when looking upon the blasphemy that springs up from the apostacies, backslidings, and hypocrisy of many, a pang passes his heart, and he is ready to wear the garment of mourning: he feels that the cause dearest to his soul is assailed, and he unfeignedly laments the infatuation and misery that prevail with men.

Another blessed evidence of a devoted state, will be found in the readiness with which the

persecuted or injured saints are espoused. When iniquity abounds, the love of many will wax cold, but not so with a really devoted heart; aboundings of trial do but strengthen and improve the pure principle; and one who has learnt to count all things but loss for Christ, will not cease to acknowledge Christ's children to be the excellent of the earth, in times when it may be dangerous to own them, or when to espouse such a cause would be to involve reputation, interest, and present ease. True devotion loves the occasion when its genuine character may be proved, and never will it shrink from the confession of Jesus in His poor members, or from standing forth to be a succourer of those who endure persecution for Christ's sake. In the daily intercourse also that takes place in this life, such persons will be ready in all companies to take up the cause of calumniated disciples and discipleship, and will not be ashamed of owning the Lord and His prisoners, because others in high station or authority cast them out.

Devotion will preserve from the fear of personal sufferings for Christ's sake: the thought of those endurances which others have encountered for him will not intimidate: there is, it is true, a conviction of weakness, and a sense of the propensity of nature to start from what gives pain; but when the object is *Christ*, and the pathway of tribulation leads to *Him*,

fears and anxieties are repelled. This conclusion has long since been made, to part from Christ is worse than death; and when the question arises, of whether this result must be met, or persecutions, &c. be endured, it requires not many moments to deliberate: loss of substance, of friends, of character, of life, cannot be put in competition with the favour and love of Christ; and trusting to Him for support under the trials which may arise, the devoted heart still cleaves to its beloved, and is willing to encounter all things for Jesu's name.

The devoted man is not always in circumstances which separate him from worldly avocations and business; he may be encompassed by concerns of a secular kind, requiring his attention, and belonging to his appointed lot: these things will not prevent the exercise of his consecrated affections, he will make them an occasion of demonstrating still more decisively the devotion of his soul, not only in the discharge of the duty with integrity and a single eye, but by possessing in the midst of outward avocations inward abstraction of mind. He need not wholly fetter his intellectual and spiritual energies, by the business in which he is engaged; he finds it possible still to set God before his eyes, and ofttimes refreshes his spirit by an ejaculatory appeal to the Lord, in which he proves whither his desires tend, and where his treasure is. He is also glad to return to his

dearer pursuits, and having discharged his worldly business with diligence, so as to redeem time for his spiritual exercises, he comes back to these with new impulse and appetite, and feels that this is the element in which he would ever live.

Devotion expresses itself in loving to rest at Jesu's feet: here the consecrated soul would take up its abode: it is its delight to pray, to worship, and adore; it is its refreshment to have enlarged intercourse with the Lord, that every secret, every care, every hope, may be told to Him in the confidence of holy fellowship. And this disposition will of course lead to that close communion which realizes this privilege: it belongs to that devotion which never can be satisfied until it reaches the eternal world, and sees Him face to face. Willing as the believer is to abide in the flesh, because he knows that hereby he is fulfilling his appointed course, he longs to depart, esteeming it far better to be with Christ: he looks and sighs for the hour, when, putting off the tabernacle of flesh, he shall rise to the fruition of His God, and cannot consider himself entered into his true state of rest, until he is perfected for ever with the Lord, and glorified with him: nevertheless, he patiently stays his Lord's will and time; but what he can obtain of vision his devoted spirit seeks, and in the peculiar exercises of com-

munion with the Lord, he endeavours to anticipate and taste his portion in Him.

How different is this frame of mind to what some men imagine of devotion! By the world, it is fashionable to stigmatize the profession of fervor to God, and to calumniate its character, calling it enthusiasm, bigotry, madness, and representing it as destructive to every natural feeling and duty of life; and whilst a spirit of earnestness and ardour is commended, and admired, in every other department, this higher calling is instantly reproached as altogether inconsistent with man's condition in this world, and contrary to the honor and glory of God. We may admit that this judgment arises from ignorance in some men, but it is a *culpable ignorance*, they found their slanders upon the exhibition which has been made of religious devotion, by men equally ignorant with themselves, whereas, ere they pronounce judgment, it would only be equitable to examine the cause, and to ascertain the real character which they professedly and violently condemn. The devotion of the Bible is *holy* in all its bearings: it does not consist of monastic gloom, and selfish solitude: the hermit and the monk may receive the tribute of romantic admiration, or may be the subject of severe animadversion, but let not this profession be placed at the bar as *Christian*

devotion: Christian devotion is wholly at variance with whatever seeks not the glory of God, in the active discharge of every relative duty, and therefore can never acknowledge the self-seeker, or the indolent. It will be well also if some persons, honestly desiring to devote themselves to God but mistaking the nature of devotion, would seriously examine the scripture history of spiritual consecration; they will then assist to rectify the false judgment of the world, and men will perceive, that whilst the Holy Spirit justly arrests and absorbs the soul where true devotion lives, He turns the consecrated affections into channels of activity, and causes the life and conversation of all his devoted ones to run, like some fructifying river through the earth, and to yield beauty, plenty, and profit by the stream. Let our blessed Lord himself stand before us as the great example. Where do we discover devotion such as His! The humanity that he assumed was, as in all excellencies, so in this *perfect;* but mark His life, in season and out of season, by night and day; His course was one of *labour*, His life was an exhibition of every duty and relation *perfectly* discharged, yet whole nights were passed upon the mountain, and a great while before it was day He rose up to pray. Even His labours were also performed in the same spirit, and His meat and drink was to do the Father's will, preaching to sinners! Now we know that Christain perfection is conformity

to Christ; and that, in proportion to our attainments in what answers to his life and mind, so is our measure of Christian excellence. Here then is the pattern for *devotion*, and by this rule let us judge its character, the condition of others, and our own profession of the faith. If we hear our Lord declaring, "For their sakes I sanctify, that is, *consecrate*, myself," let our hearts and lives be heard to answer, For His sake I devote myself; and let the rule and measure of this devotion be according to Christ; then undoubtedly we shall possess, and exhibit, all, and much more than has been described in this statement.

We ought not to shrink from the call: that it will be beneficial to others should be a stimilus to the charitable: certainly it will lead to a high degree of that practical charity, that "seeketh not her own;" and herein we shall be employed in a course of life, that must necessarily administer both to the bodies and souls of men. More especially by lifting up the standard of christianity to its proper eminence, and showing to professors that in such a cause, and for such a Lord, all is well lost, excepting only that portion which may be held to His glory and with His blessing. That it will be of vast profit to ourselves we cannot doubt. the present proportion of peace that ensues will be beyond calculation, for the Lord delights in the expression of such consecration, and in-

variably attends it with his multiplying grace, so that there is a correspondent growth in all the spiritual life here below. It is usually accompanied with firm and abiding hopes, and prospects, towards the eternal kingdom, for the soul already lives intimately with God; and when eternity is contemplated, or approached, it is no strange world, it is no unwelcome theme. Nor can we doubt the future proportion of bliss and glory that awaits the devoted: there will be an inheritance that corresponds with the life on earth; and although all is of grace, and the title to glory is the same with all, being the alone righteousness of the Lord Jesus, yet grace will acknowledge its own work, in its own way, and they that have sowed plenteously shall reap also plenteously. These are considerations which ought to be accepted, and cherished, and turned into practical application to our own heart and life, moving us all to emulate the example of those who have trod on these high places of Zion, and to seek the entire devotion of every power to the glory of the Lord.

The means leading to such an experience will be the cherished appreciation of the things that are spiritual; we must labour to obtain a high value of God, and of all his ways and will, that we may not fail in *motives* to this personal surrender. The resolute resistance of indolence must be maintained, and whatever would

interrupt our regular course of prayer, or labour, or duty of any kind, must be resisted as a check coming from the enemy, and directed against our devotion. Particularly, we must guard against creaturely affections, which eat out the pure fire of fervent devotion to God, and by dividing the thoughts and pursuits weaken the force of spiritual energies. All human attachments should be governed by spiritual motives, and kept subordinate to spiritual pursuits. The society of the saints should be sought, and cultivated, that through the communion and blessing promised upon this fellowship, the flame may be kept lively, and love be stirred up, particularly by means of converse with such as are high in their holy course; these examples serve to quicken, and put new vigor into the whole man, and frequently open out opportunities for usefulness, by which the soul is strengthened in faith and simplicity. There should be the habit of keeping up observation upon the transactions around, so as to derive from all events a supply to this disposition. The misery attendant upon a course of sin should be observed; and the vanity, unprofitableness, and ruin, that tread upon the heels of the transgressor, should be seriously marked; such evidences serve to fill the soul with awe, and to awaken increased earnestness in pressing after better things. The joy of the upright should be observed; how the Lord is

ever confessing his people, extending to them deliverances, mercies, and gladness that the world cannot give; such instances confirm the truth of the promises, and send the soul to feed in the same pasture with renewed delight. The difference experienced by different men in the last hour should be observed, and improved. Many depart this life in the midst of an awful stupor having no bands in their death, and coming into no trouble, until the sudden blaze of eternity awakes them from their dream: Others die in anticipation of the woe to which their miserable souls are consigned, and quit the present scene leaving a fearful testimony of the desolation they reap for their sins: Others depart in anxious solicitude, not having lived up to their profession,—nor sufficiently realized their relation to God, they are thrown into confusion and uncertainty now that the summons is come, and scarcely know whether they may call God theirs or not: Others rest on their bed as on a place of sanctified repose, they encounter the last enemy with triumph, or with holy and stedfast serenity, knowing whom they have believed. Death has no terrors, its sting is gone, Jesus is with them their strong Deliverer and Friend, the pains of the dying body are endured in meek submission, and the hopes of a never dying soul are brightened as the last moment draws near. These are privileges

tasted by the devoted, and are the result of God s faithful keeping, and endless grace. Such different scenes many times occur; if they occur under our own observation, they should be treasured up, and the profit be made visible in us by the increase of our resolve, in the strength of the Lord, to "make our calling and election sure," and by earnest renewal of our cheerful service and willing devotion.

In this day of Christ's kingdom, we should also be attentive to the signs of the times, mark how the Saviour is advancing prosperously towards the establishment of His kingdom in the earth, and how all events are rapidly accomplishing the word of prophecy, and bringing the dispensation of Jesus' final triumph near: such evidences should be noted, and registered in the mind, filling us with glowing expectation of His glory, and with laborious zeal to be found working in our lot, and day, towards the advance of that glory. These views will remind us of our Lord's warning, and bid us beware, lest that day come upon us as a thief; or find us saying, "my lord delayeth His coming," yielding ourselves to the ease of a carnal world, and to the indulgence of fleshly delights. It is ours to shake ourselves from the dust, and "arise and anoint the shield:" the times are important, the Christian energies should be vigorous, *devotion* should

mark that we live in the due influence of these great concerns, and that we are ready when the Lord shall call.

Let us adopt these measures, as means towards an end that we must all admit is exceedingly desirable; and looking into our hearts, be ashamed, and sorry with godly sorrow, if there is any thing in this world, to which we are more devoted than unto Christ. He has every thing wherewith to persuade us to complete consecration; His wondrous love to men, the loving kindness extended to ourselves, His own excellency; let Him have the place in our hearts that is due, and be enthroned within us in all the victory, and triumph, that should attend His blessed sway.

Can we prove from scripture that devotion of heart arises out of fervent gratitude for God's mercies?

"Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much." Luke vii. 47.

"I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God." Gal. ii. 20, 21. See also Luke xvii. 15, 16; xviii. 43.

Will devotion of principle lead to the

consecration of the whole man to God's service?

"He who persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me." Gal. i. 23, 24. See also 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Rom. xii. 1.

Does the disposition of soul call to the laborious cultivation of every power for God?

"Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that profiting may appear unto all." 1 Tim. iv. 15. See also 1 Tim. vi. 11, 14. Rom. vi. 19. 1 Peter ii. 9—12.

Do the scriptures justify us in concluding that when the heart is supremely devoted to God, it will produce the effects that have been stated—will it awaken a holy alacrity, to know what the Lord requires?

"Lord what wilt thou have me to do." Acts ix. 6.

Will it induce a ready surrender and obedience to his voice?

"Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Gal. i. 16.

"They forsook all and followed him." Luke v. 11. See also Mark i. 20.

Does it occasion a holy solicitude, to preserve the manifestations of Divine favor to the soul?

"Thy face Lord will I seek: hide not thy face far from me." Psalm xxvii. 8, 9.

"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up nor awake my love, until He please." Cant. iii. 5.

Will the spirit of a devoted man be restless if God's presence seems clouded?

"Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon, for why should I be as one that turneth aside." Cant. i. 7. See also Psalm lxxxix. 46.

Is the devoted heart pained at the offences and reproaches that fall on the cause of Christ?

"For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ?" Phil. iii. 18.

Will this disposition render a man bold to espouse the character and interest of the persecuted saint?

"But God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel, according to the power of God." 2 Tim. i. 7, 8.

Will devotion render a man above the fear and dread of persecution for Christ's sake.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong." 2 Cor. xii. 10.

Will a devoted heart be raised above the world, and find its only real enjoyment in the spiritual pursuits of a Christian?

"For our conversation is in heaven." Phil. iii. 20. See also 1 John iv. 17.

Does this disposition lead to breathings after God, and longings for the perfection of the eternal world?

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. iv. 10.

"For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." 2 Cor. v. 2.

Are there any Scripture passages which prove that devotion has its correspondent reward of grace?

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. See also 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. Hos. xiv. 9.

Is this holy fire maintained through the use of personal vigilance and fellowship with the saints?

"I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. iii. 14.

"And it came to pass that while they communed together aud reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them; and they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 15, 32.

DESPAIR.

DESPAIR is the absence of all hope; and in reference to things of eternal import, it is attended with a dreadful anticipation of the wrath to come. It is a condition that is realized in all its fearful extent, in the invisible world of woe; and describes a wretchedness which may well alarm the mind, and fill us with a solemn impression, whilst we enter into the investigation of its nature and effects. We are accustomed to consider despair the inevitable attendant upon a state of condemnation hereafter; nor do we doubt the fact, that infernal spirits are suffering under its dominion in hell; and if ever we have allowed our thoughts to pass into that horrible scene, we have contemplated the millions of the damned, in the endurance of a hopeless existence. The spirits, that fell from the glory of their first estate in heaven, were plunged into an abyss of eternal banishment from the manifestation of God's mercy and love; they were consigned to endurance of an *everlasting* fire never to be quenched; and the sen-

tence of woe was complete, in the awful consciousness of unchangeable ruin, to which they were condemned; the never-dying worm gnawing the spirit, as it were, and inflicting the perpetual torment of selfish remorse, anguish, despair. It is this hopelessness that constitutes the greatest misery of hell; for we may reasonably conclude, that some mitigation of suffering would be experienced, were it possible to hope, that, at some given period, the dreadful purpose of the Almighty might have exhausted its design to punish, and that once again the dreadful bars of the pit might be drawn back, and the prisoners of darkness be liberated from their chains. But a gleam such as this illumines not that gloomy scene, nor is there one ray of expectation, or of hope, to break upon the endless night: they are reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day; and in that judgment their woe will be publicly confirmed, and increase of vengeance plead the cause of the eternal Judge. It is this place of torment to which sinners from the earth are also delivered up; the wicked, dying in their sins, pass from a state of rebellion here, to the just wages of their sin: they have confederated with Satan, they have fought his battles, pleaded his cause, bowed to his rule, and vindicated his revolt, is it not therefore righteous, that the same result should be experienced, and that the judgment of God should pronounce an equal

sentence of woe? So far from the sins of men having less of aggravation in them than those of devils, they are greater in measure, and in madness, by reason of the resistance of demonstrations that should convince them of the evil of such a course; and had they no other advantage, than that of possessing the awful example of God's wrath upon the fallen angels, this would be sufficient to prove, that their iniquity has in it the height of folly and desperation, and a defiance of judgment, even when exhibited before their eyes. As they merit, so they will receive the reward of the deeds they have done in the body; and this reward will be the retribution that fell on fallen angels; they depart into the same prison, they suffer the same everlasting fire and worm, they are the prey to the same despair! But this is not all: despair is not confined to the invisible region, here, on earth, there are miserable captives to this frightful adversary, and ere the soul quits its earthly tabernacle, it is possible that it may receive the sentence of death, and experience the horror of a condemned state. It is absolutely declared in the Scripture, that there is a sorrow of the world which worketh *death;* and the nature of this sorrow is described; it consists of a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries.

Let us now inquire into the origin of this disposition. It arises from depravity of mind and

heart. The depravity of the mind is that of pride, and perverseness, which chooses to form a standard of judgment, respecting the nature and government of God, contrary to that which Himself has revealed. God has proclaimed His own nature, in such a way, as to leave no doubt of its excellency, or of the mercy and love in which He delighteth: but the sinner is disposed to take partial views of this revelation, and according to his own prejudices, or dispositions, to present to his mind, not the God of the Scriptures, but a God of his own imagination. Many times, this is done, to the exclusion of those attributes which are calculated to attract, and encourage, the sinner; and Jehovah is contemplated only in the glory of His Justice, Power, Holiness, but with none of the lovely perfections in which He inviteth man to rest in Him. Hence the soul is kept in bondage; a slavish fear is generated in the heart; and God, so far from being the object of childlike confidence and affiance, is a terror to the thoughts, and a dread to the soul,—it is the fear that has torment. If any idea of acceptance with God occurs to the mind, it is not in the legitimate channel: either some mode is prescribed, which does not agree with God's determination, or, if God's mode is accepted professedly, it is not discerned with appreciation, or appropriation. Sometimes there is a vain idea, that by works, or repentance, or vows, God may be rendered propitious; and

that in such laborious approaches, the soul may find rest. They are ignorant of the righteousness of God, they go about therefore to establish their own righteousness, and have not submitted to the righteousness of God. Hence they are prepared to fall into dismay, at the discovery which they make of the fallacy of such expectations; and in the experience of their own insincerity, weakness, and fluctuation of principle, are ready to be overwhelmed by confusion and fear. If Jesus Christ is an object of professed faith, He is not the object of simple affiance. His *name* is uttered, and His work is acknowledged, but it is in barren speculation, and head knowledge—the mediation, the blood, the righteousness of Christ made over in covenant to the helpless soul, are not understood: and there is no saving application of the intercessory grace, and power of Jesus, such as may afford a solid ground of trust for the soul. All this is depraved and perverse, for it is the suggestion of a mind diseased by native ignorance, and arrogance; and it is the obstinacy of a soul that will not bow to the divine revelation, nor take the Almighty in His own prescribed way.

But chiefly, depravity of *heart* is the secret spring of despair. There is no reconciliation of the affections to the name and government of God. His excellencies are not *welcome*, and His rule is distasteful. Whatever the sinner may profess, he is not at peace with the Lord,

and stands ready to quarrel, even at the manifestation of excellency, because it does not accord with his own depraved desires; his heart is bent upon the fulfilment of its lusts, and his soul is still in league with death, therefore he chooses not to behold God with a single eye, in His own glorious light, lest he should be required to admit its purifying demands and operations; and being resolved upon adherence to his own ways, he is prepared to calumniate the Divine Name, to misrepresent the Divine Nature, to throw the fault of his misery upon God's want of mercy, and to excuse himself from obedience on the pretext of the little encouragement presented to him by the Lord. This is strikingly proclaimed by the Lord through the Prophet Jeremiah; the exhortation is freely given, sufficiently intimating a readiness on God's part to show mercy,—"Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst; but thou saidst there is no hope, no, for I have loved strangers and after them will I go;" sufficiently affording the developement of the secret spring of despair, even a depraved determination of heart against obedience to God's law.

So long as all is externally smooth and peaceful, we do not discover the existence of despair in these characters: there is nothing to excite to demonstration, all is at ease within, there is not so much as *despondency*, much less is there

the horror of utter desolation of mind; but the materials are ready for the occasion which may arise, and no sooner is the sinner, by any circumstance of his life, brought into closer contact with God, as a Judge and an avenger of sin, than immediately this effect will follow to a greater or less degree. The arguments of the Lord find no access to the heart: the sullenness of Cain is exhibited again: resentment against God fills the breast with aversion, and conscious impotency settles it into despair. Nor is he afraid to express his wicked conceptions of the Almighty, and his unrighteous charge against the Divine name, for he feels and he declares, "I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed."

Despair is not to be considered, like other abominable productions of the heart, a *native* disposition, it is *induced*, and consequent upon some other cause. We never find a natural man disposed to despair, until he has sinned in such a way as to terrify his own mind, by the irresistible evidence of his guilt. The general disposition of a sinner is to *hope*, and nothing is more difficult than to shake the false confidence of man, and to teach him that he has no foundation for his presumptuous expectations. Examine the feelings of men in all ranks, circumstances, ages, you will find that *hope* is the natural tendency of the heart, and even in such

instances as exhibit the most awful features of rebellion and crime, this innate feeling still exists. The drunkard, the adulterer, the thief, the liar, all will tell you they *hope*, and although it may be that they are obliged to confess their *present* state is not hopeful, they will add, but God is merciful, and I shall yet be spared, my life is not expended, I may yet repent, thousands as bad as I am have found pardon at the last, and even on a death bed I may find peace. Is not this familiarly known by us all? We have ourselves been under the deadly delusion, and we are still surrounded by men who are saying to themselves incessantly, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." What then is it which induces *despair?* and where is the means by which presumptuous hope is blasted, and desolation takes its place? Despair is consequent upon transgression, and induced by the commission of crime, which is made to appear in its true character, and the condemning nature of which is set home by terror of conscience. There are many sins that pave the way particularly to this condition, and since it is the design of Satan, through the deceitfulness of sin, to put out our eyes, and blind us to the *result* of our wicked career, it may be profitable for us to look into the ways which lead the miserable sinner into this abyss, in order that, if there is any thing like such ways in our

course, we may stop and pause and repent, ere it be too late.

One of the principal paths, conducting to despair, is the resistance of conscience. Although this witness is not sufficient to reveal unto man the full extent of the malignity of sin, it is possessed of dreadful capability to accuse, and many times it seems disposed to take up the friendly part to the transgressor, and to forewarn him of danger; it follows him in his revels, it pursues him in his retreats, it haunts him in his business, it attends him on his pillow, the offences that are perpetrated are remonstrated against, and the issue of the unequal contest with the Almighty is proclaimed. It seems to speak, in loud and in arresting terms, Stop, sinner, pause on thy way, think what must follow, ruin not thyself! But how are these remonstrances received? They are counted troublesome intrusions upon the present enjoyment of the day, and the language of the heart is, away, away, leave me to my pleasures, and trouble me no more. Long is the refusal heard, and long does the voice continue to reprove, but not always will the strivings thus be felt, there is a time when God will say, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." But is it an *eternal* separation? shall the accuser never more be heard? alas! a fearful repetition of the charge is reserved, when, the sinner having

filled up the measure of his iniquity, God will give the awful commission, and conscience shall be sent as His executioner to inflict an anguish of unutterable kind, and to awaken and rouse to feelings of despair. How then do dreams of pleasure vanish, and how is the gratification of the flesh rendered loathsome! how now would the soul recal the friendly warning, and professedly be willing to repent! Let us call to mind the fearful example of the agonized Judas,—his fruitless exclamation, "I have betrayed the innocent blood"—his expression of disgust at the wages of his sin, "he cast the money on the ground"—and his hopeless wretchedness, without retreat, or refuge, or repose! Such is the consequence, in innumerable succeeding instances, of men who have resisted conscience, sinned against light, and refused the warnings of the Almighty.

Despair is sometimes consequent upon trifling with means and privileges. When God is pleased, in his abundant goodness, to provide ordinances and helps for men, he expects that they should be accepted, and renders men responsible for the privileges he has provided. Many there are who totally neglect them, others who attend but do not appreciate them—men, whose idle and profitless state bespeaks the little estimation they put upon the day of grace. The time, however, comes, when they feel an excitement towards those interests which once

they despised; and from a sense of the approaching terrors of judgment, they begin to wish that more attention had been paid to religion in their former days; the recollection of abused opportunities is attended with alarm, and the present loss they suffer is considered a mark of divine wrath upon unpardonable sin; the spirit sinks into despondency, and having no just views of God and the way of salvation, it falls lower and lower, until settled despair takes possession of the breast, and the lamentation is uttered that the day of mercy is gone!

There are some miserable sinners, who having made a profession of the gospel, turn away from their profession, and, after having lived in the midst of the high association of the children of God, fall once more into the service of the world and the society of the ungodly. Their declension from the profession was perhaps at first *backsliding*, but it ends in total apostacy, and the name and the cause of the Saviour is traduced, and blasphemed, by lips, that a little while before joined in the tribute of prayer and praise. For a little time the revolt is carried with a high hand, and the sinner appears as if he rejoiced in having broken the yoke and burst the bands; but God is dreadful in retribution, and marking his foe, has an unerring power to wing an arrow to his heart, that shall rankle there for ever. This is many times visibly displayed in the torments which

seize upon the apostate, and many times in life, and in the hour of death, he is made to proclaim his own folly, and to utter the desperate language of black despair. The insults he has thrown upon the crucified Saviour, and the despite he has done to the Spirit of grace, now return upon his own head in the most terrific weight of woe, and pressing him under the burden force from his soul the utterance that, whilst it proclaims the misery of the sentenced soul, fills the hearer with awe.

There is also a fearful progress to this condition, which some men make with a rapidity that is truly frightful: it is the course of a *seducer*. Men, not content with the commission of their own sins, who are active agents of the Devil in conducting others to the pit; and who, without remorse or compunction, disseminate principles of infidelity, and spread the poison of their vile and abominable principles in every society where they mix. Nor is it only in the propagation of infidel opinions, but seducers of another description abound, men of corrupt minds, who do not hesitate in betraying the unsuspecting, or in practising upon the vicious, and who are instrumental in deluding the unhappy victims of their depravity until they perish everlastingly. When such men are visited with conviction of their guilt, pangs of more than usual agony seize them, they are not only overwhelmed with the view of their

own guilt, but the spectres of the lost souls whom they have undone flit before their affrighted imagination, and add terror to their state of unbearable misery. They look upon such as may yet be living with anguish at the success of their wiles and stratagems, they follow the souls of such as are departed to eternity with realizing horror of their shrieks and wailing, they anticipate a time when they must meet again and stand before the bar of a righteous Judge, and they look for the fearful result of being consigned to the same prison-house, where they must hear everlastingly the cry of anguish blended with the never-ending accusation of their seducer,—such frightful pictures sicken and appal the soul, and it sinks into a despair more intolerable than any description can pourtray!

These are some of the paths, that conduct to that dreadful state of mind, in which there is no hope, and where God is pleased to permit that a man's sins shall "go before-hand to judgment." As the condition is miserable, so is the further result; for this misery acts upon the whole man with an awfully impelling power, either driving him onwards in a career of foul and increasing iniquity, or hurrying him to that last fatal act, whereby he lays violent hands upon himself, and plunges, uncalled, into the presence of that God, who hurls his guilty soul into the regions that are below. In either

of these cases, the end of despair is in character with its nature; man is desperately resolved in his course of rebellion, and maintains his infatuated career even unto death; and after death he encounters only a confirmation of his fears, and the full execution of the wrath of God.

Who can contemplate this state without a shudder, or look into the doom that awaits the transgressor, unmoved! Surely, to us, the subject speaks with a strong address, that is calculated to awaken us to vigilance: and should we be conscious, at this moment, of any thing like the sins that end in this ruin, we are mercifully counseled through the exhibition of such facts, and ought to hearken and resolve upon the destruction of every accursed thing.

It is a great consolation to believers, that they are "kept by the power of God," and shall never fall into despair. Doubts and despondencies may trouble the soul, but He, who has enlightened and regenerated them in an eternal covenant purpose, will never surrender them to this disposition of hell. Nevertheless, they are kept *through faith*; and therefore we are required to rise to the occasion, and in all situations to put forth the blessed principles we have received from our God. Let our thoughts fully admit the awful view of a despairing soul in all its parts. It is profitable to contemplate the condition, although we may be preserved,

because hereby we are stimulated to gratitude and watchfulness, and reverence, and perceive more clearly the necessity of being well established in a sincere profession. We have probably *tasted* somewhat of the *nature* of despair, so far as anguish, doubt, alarm, have harassed our souls, under the sense of sin; but little can we conceive what is the extent of that misery, which renders a man an intolerable burden to himself, robs him of every gleam of hope, and makes him conceive, that the realization of hell torments may be preferable to the torture of that experience, to which he is delivered up in this world. Ah let us hang over the dead bodies of the wretched sinners who have died by suicide, let us follow their souls into the mansions where they have daringly thrust themselves, let us endeavour to dive into the mystery of suffering that must have fallen upon these offenders here and hereafter, and then "stand in awe, and sin not!"

We should be very watchful against the suggestions that would generate despondency in the mind; for although the true believer shall be preserved from the ruin of the soul, we know not, whilst we are under such clouds, whether we are of the redeemed. It ought to be our earnest desire, not even to wear the semblance of a state that borders upon such a severing from God; and we are to remember, that the doubts and fears by which the soul is agitated

are by no means honourable to God, or in character with our profession. They are not honourable to God, for they express a distrust of His nature and His promises. They are not honourable to our Lord, for they convey the idea of defect in His power, or in His grace. Certainly they savour not of *humility;* and, however they may mask themselves under the appearance of lowliness, they are in fact fraught with pride, and generally arise out of some dissatisfaction at the helpless and dependant condition to which we are reduced: whereas true humility teaches us, whilst we bewail our vileness, to be content to be nothing, that Christ may be all. There is likewise very frequently want of *sincerity* in the heart that doubts. If we know the Lord, we know that He cannot cast out one who comes to Him in truth. If we doubt,—is it not because we are not quite clear in our surrender, or willingness to be saved in God's own way? But, whatever our despondencies may arise from, of this we may be assured, they never can bring glory to Him whom we serve, and they should be shaken off by every believing effort in our power.

These efforts must first be directed to attain clear views of the Divine Nature:—we should look to our God in Christ, and endeavour to maintain a spiritual perception of the excellency and strength of the foundation on which the Church is built. By this means we are fur-

nished with a constant place of retreat in our times of temptation; and when fears arise, we may run into the Divine Name, as into a strong tower, and be safe. It is glorified in Christ Jesus, and in Him every eternal attribute is made a chamber wherein the tempted soul may find rest. We should also make continual appeals to the blood of atonement, endeavour to keep up a lively sense of the blood of sprinkling, delivering us from an evil, or accusing, conscience, and coming before the mercy-seat in the full assurance of faith, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. In this disposition we shall be kept also in the delightful service which is perfect freedom, and obedience will be our privilege and joy. Thus, with a sanctified mind full of just discernment into God's nature, and with a renewed heart full of love to His government, we shall be prepared to listen to *His* counsels; and, whatever may be our spiritual distress or conflict, we shall be kept from despair.

Can we prove that there is such a state as that of despair, or hopeless misery?

"The sorrow of the world worketh death." 2 Cor. vii. 10.

Is it a condition experienced by devils?

"The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved

in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Jude 6. See also Mark ix. 48.

Do the souls of the wicked, when leaving this world, experience the same despair?

"It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Mark ix. 47, 48. See also Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

Is despair confined to the invisible world of woe, or do men endure it on this side eternity?

"There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries." Heb. x. 26, 27.

From what does it arise?

"I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed, and I was *afraid*." Matt. xxv. 24, 25.

"Fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love." 1 John iv. 18.

"And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil

heart." Jer. xviii. 12. See also Rom. x. 3. Jer. ii. 25.

What is it that leads a sinner into this miserable condition?

"The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire; who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isa. xxxiii. 14.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Jer. viii. 20.

"The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." Matt. xii. 31. See also Heb. x. 26, 27: vi. 4—8.

"Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." 2 Tim. iii. 13.

To what does a state of despair hurry the sinner?

"And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." Matt. xxvii. 5. Rev. xxi. 8.

What are preventives to this miserable condition?

"Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." 1 Pet. ii. 6.

"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. x. 22. See also 1 John ii. 1, 2. Heb. iii. 12.

HOPE.

It is our part, on the present occasion, to inquire into that disposition which stands opposed to despair. Of course, therefore, we are prepared to turn our thoughts upon the *Hope* by which the breast of man is cheered, and his spirit is animated to the discharge of his obligations in this world. But, it is in reference to his concerns as a disciple of the Saviour, that we are to engage our minds, and to those peculiar duties which belong to him as a candidate for an everlasting inheritance.

Hope signifies confident expectation of some good: it differs from desire, for a man may earnestly desire what he has no prospect or expectation of obtaining; but if he hopes, it expresses the supposition, existing in his mind, that the desired object is attainable. As a Christian grace it is peculiar in its whole character, and is not to be confounded with those vain anticipations of acceptance with God, by which thousands of men in their natural state are awfully deceived; and upon examination we shall perceive, that in all its bearings it

stands forth in singular excellency, and is justly considered one of the most precious *Covenant* gifts. We may consider its peculiarity in respect of its origin—its operations—and its end.

In its origin, it is exalted in our view as the fruit of the eternal Spirit. It is true, man is not destitute of hope, as a passion of the soul, independently of the new creating grace of the Holy Ghost. Every faculty and power of man derived its existence originally from his Creator; and, amongst other blessings bestowed upon him by Jehovah, his bosom was the region where this disposition had its dwelling. It was designed to be a welcome companion, through the course of innocence which he was appointed to run, and to prove an animating principle, prompting him to look forward to more abundant joys than even Eden could bestow: and so long as man retained his innocency, this affection would answer the end for which it was bestowed. But very different are the circumstances of man since he became a sinner; and when the reflective observation is turned upon his present condition, we are convinced that a ruinous change has taken place. Nature exhibits the appearance of some vast ruin, by which a stately superstructure has been demolished and laid in fragments on the earth. We gather, from the nature of the fragments which we contemplate, some idea of what once

existed of splendour, skill, and beauty; but we have no other sensation, than that of a mournful impression of what *has been*. Amidst these fragments we find *hope*: it exists, but it has lost its cementing principle, by which it was joined to the things of God, and it is now converted into the service of other lords, or lays in the midst of the universal desolation: it answers the end of administering to man motives and energies for the discharge of his present interests, but it is devoid of any divine influence; and if it attempts to assist him in the interests that are future, it proves a deceitful worker, and leads him to false confidences and false joys, flattering him that all is well when he is in the very bond of iniquity, and far from the salvation of God. Now, it is the purpose of God still to make use of this his original gift, and to adopt it into that new creation, through which native ruin is repaired. But this is only done by a work of free and surprising grace, which lays hold upon the faculties of the sinner, and sanctifies them to their first end; and thus hope is in no case serviceable to salvation, excepting where it receives a right tendency by the Spirit, and is the instrument which the Holy Ghost cleanses and renews. The description given of this sanctified exercise of hope, in 2 Thess. ii. 16. is expressive of its character, and describes exactly its origin also;—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which

hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and *good hope through grace;*"—here hope is styled *good*, because it is legitimate, and the gift of God; and it is ascribed to *grace*, because it proceeds from the unmerited favour of the Lord. The whole of its character corresponds with this origin; for as it proceeds from God in Christ, so it is intended to lead to God in Christ; and therefore Christian hope rises above all created objects, and enters into the revealed Jehovah, as its rest and only centre. This is effected through the Spirit's teaching, who effectually breaks a man off from his false refuges, by showing him, that in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and that truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. Human depravity, weakness, and insufficiency are felt, and the soul is made to quit all those expectations which heretofore were content to repose in earth. The spiritually discerning mind, contemplating Jehovah's perfections, beholds a glorious contrast to all created things, and finds somewhat in the Lord that commends itself to his judgment and his affections; so that, looking upon Jehovah's Truth, Holiness, Unchangeableness, and Power, he exclaims, Here my soul can rest, here hope may abide, and the result must be sure. Never, however, let us lose sight of that method by which the eternal Name is made the source of hope. It is not for a polluted creature like man to lay hold

upon the divine glory, without the propitiation which introduces the soul into God's complacent presence. The divine Perfections are a terror, when viewed independently of redemption, for our God is a consuming fire, and it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands: hence, when the scriptures present the hope of a believer to view, they show how it is encouraged and generated through Him in whom God is well pleased, even Jesus the Saviour. On this account Christ is called *our Hope;* and thus the nature and efficacy of His work, as available for man, is emphatically described, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil:" agreeing with the testimony of St. Peter, first Epistle i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." In these two passages the Holy Spirit comprehends the whole of a Christian hope, leading up the mind to the everlasting kingdom, and showing how it is *Jesus glorified,* who is the foundation of all the cheering prospects by which the redeemed are animated here! He is within the veil, as the justified Head of his blood-bought people. He there occupies the mediatorial throne, being crowned with honour and glory. He there transacts all the concerns which relate to the establishment

of his saints; and being, in His resurrection, publicly acknowledged the triumphant Deliverer, in whom all the spiritual seed shall be justified, they also glory in Him, and possess a hope that cannot make ashamed, for it is founded in the Covenant and abideth in the Lord Jesus. Abstract notions, however, are not enough: the Holy Spirit is not satisfied with proclaiming the provision, and obtaining man's assent to its truth and excellency, but He gives the individual assurance of the heritage, by revealing the gift *in the heart*, through lively faith, and in vital union with the Son of God. So it is described as "Christ *in you*, which is the hope of glory;" and the confident expectation of the saint is made to be able to justify its character, giving "a *reason* for the hope" that is in him. Herein we must confess, that Christian hope possesses a glorious peculiarity, and that its origin is high, sublime, and wonderful.

The *operations* of hope are not less wonderful and excellent. As God's instrument it is appointed to produce the most blessed and salutary effects in the believer; and it is interesting to such as experimentally understand its influence in the Christian life, to look into the various blessings which attend its voice. It is to the dictates of this grace that the sinner is indebted for every encouragement he takes, to appeal for mercy to his soul. Were it not for hope, what could induce him, sin-burdened and

miserable as he is, to enter into the presence of God, and expose his maladies to the Omniscient eye? It would rather be rational to suppose, that he would flee from the scrutiny of the Almighty, and strive to conceal the provocations and the uncleanness of which he is convicted. But, believing the revelation of mercy in Christ Jesus, and knowing that compassion has been manifested to sinners vile as he, and has relieved cases of extremity like his own, he takes courage to draw near, and prostrating himself before the throne of grace, he proffers his soul that it may receive a cure: he is brought there by *hope*—hope built on the promises of God in Christ, and teaching him to make the experiment of whether God will be gracious to him. Thus he flees "for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before him." In proportion to his spiritual understanding of the fulness of the Lord's sufficiency his hope is vigorous, and becomes lively in its character, combining expectation and humble confidence; he knows that Christ is both able and willing, and judging of His method of government in other instances, he believes that his may be a case, wherein the riches of divine compassion may take occasion to glorify itself. This is not his persuasion, however, by *natural* reasonings, for through these he is led to doubt, and fear, and despond. Many are the cruel suggestions that harass and would hold him back, and great are the

opposers that he has to encounter in this exercise of grace. On this account it is said, that, for a *helmet*, we have the *hope* of salvation, because the Christian is exposed to the assaults and blows of the enemy, who makes a desperate attack upon him through carnal reasonings, but whose hope proves a protection from the death-blow, and raises him again and again to confident expectation of success. The same necessity for the operation of hope remains to the very end of pilgrimage: there is no stage in the Christian's course, wherein he will not find himself indebted to this heavenly messenger. After he has entered upon the Christian warfare, and has obtained some degree of establishment, he is still dependent; and innumerable are the occasions wherein, did not the Lord interpose through this grace as His instrument, he would be disposed to give up the conflict, and to deem his efforts vain. How often is he cast down, mortified, and disappointed! how often filled with dismay, forebodings, and fears! and how often again revived, and bid to go on his way, by the voice of this counsellor! Hope rises to the day of necessity, proposes its arguments against the subtleties of unbelief, and prevails to reanimate to encounter every difficulty, and to contend even unto death: the promise is brought to mind, "The Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." But one of the most precious operations known by

the believer, through hope, is that purification of the heart which is effected by the motives and principles attendant upon its influence. "He that hath this hope in him, purifies himself, even as God is pure." Hoping to attain to present fellowship and future fruition of the Lord, he considers himself called, and encouraged, to make every attempt after conformity with the divine image: the appetites are refined and sanctified: present occupations and interests are embraced with the recollection of future prospects and delights; so that the mind becomes elevated, through the animating confidence that all things here below are transitory, and will yield to the blissful vision of the Almighty, and that, even whilst traversing the desert, there is a privilege which may be known by God's child, even communion with that Lord who has promised to be with His people in their way. Whatever is inconsistent with such enjoyments or expectations is considered a subject of grief, and the whole energy of the soul is put forth to the destruction of what is evil, and to the nourishment of all those graces which may adorn the breast, as the dwelling-place of Christ. A further blessing, which will attend this holy principle, is that disposition to wait patiently upon God, which it invariably generates. The soul that is filled with holy hope, must necessarily be filled with patient faith. "If we hope for that we see not, then

do we with patience wait for it:" we know that God is unchangeable, and that His delays are not denials: we know that what He has promised He must perform; and that whatever is good for us He is engaged to bestow. Believing this, the soul becomes content to leave the times and the seasons with Him, and to rest in the confident expectation that ere long He will accomplish the desire.

These are some of those precious operations which attend the life of hope in a believer's soul; and as they are excellent and peculiar, so also is the *end* which is in view, both on the part of God and in the desire of the Christian. The Christian's desire is *the possession of the Lord* here and for ever. His hope may be compared to Noah's dove, it finds no rest out of the ark of the covenant; and however it may seem to hover, as if uncertain where it would light, there is no real uncertainty, it contemplates the vast region of tumult that is exhibited on the face of this sinful world, and it turns from the contemplation with full persuasion that there is nothing there on which it ought to rest, or in which it could find repose; it lights therefore, on some sweet promise sealed in Jesu's blood, and demonstrates that it is faithful and pure in its tendency and aim. When rising to the higher realm of glory that is above, hope passes by, as it were, all the attendant wonders and joys that belong to that place of blessed-

ness, seeking the immediate vision of the Almighty; and although the society of the glorified and the splendour of heaven are subjects of admiration and delight, none of these things are comparable with that hope which reaches forth to the bosom of the eternal Love, and esteems the heaven of the soul to be the presence of his God. Thus his hope exclaims, in ardent fulness of devotion, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." On the part of God, the end in view is the *gratification* of these hopes; and accordingly the Spirit gives forth the rich persuasion of an interest in the Lord, that comforts the spirit both in life and death. Being justified by faith, the fruit is *peace*, and the Comforter seals the testimony in which hope rejoices; for whilst a present portion is inherited in the indwelling Saviour's love, the same Lord gives assurance that no disappointment shall attend the hope that is built on Him.

This portion is peculiarly verified in that period when it is most desirable that hope should abound. Hope is a companion no longer than whilst the pilgrim is travelling his journey home: it conducts him to the entrance into the eternal rest, and then bids farewell: having performed its mission, it gives place to the joy of fruition. But ere it parts from the beloved charge, it seems, as it were, to delight in giving a last demonstration of its vigorous character.

Laid on the death-bed, the pilgrim is now about to close his eyes upon all human objects—nature is fainting, and bodily pains may be great: in this situation he needs the cheering administrations of hope: nor are they absent from his dying pillow: with more than usual vigour he is enabled to realize his property in the Lord; or, if deprived of ardent experience, the calm and holy confidence of a faith that knows its ground is possessed and evinced; and under all the distressing circumstances which accompany this last stage of life, he is privileged to *rest* in the divine truth,—"I know whom I have believed; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown," are the cheering and confident hopes that he delights to utter. Nor is hope confined to the prospect of the soul's blessedness, the *body* also is a subject which is contemplated with the same cheering persuasion: he anticipates the moment when he shall drop the painful mortality which now burdens him, but he looks also to the promise, which has engaged to keep the mouldering form, and that ere long will display the triumph of the covenant by rebuilding the tabernacle, and raising it from the tomb: animated by this assurance, he can say, "my flesh shall rest in hope;" and looking to the final result of God's divine government and rule, he rejoices in Him who is "the resurrection and the life."

Here it may be necessary to observe, that

although this is the proper character of Christian hope, it is not always experienced by the believer in its true extent. There are times when hope is greatly depressed, and the believer is agitated by temptations to doubt and despond. But I would ask, to what source shall we ascribe this evil? We cannot justly charge it upon God, for He delighteth in the prosperity of His servants, and plenteously prepareth for the fullest experience of that joy in Him which is our strength. We cannot charge it upon the grace of hope, for this being a fruit of the Spirit has not such defects attendant upon its own existence. It must therefore arise from some other sources, and it can be chargeable upon none but the believer himself. We have a thousand arguments by which we sometimes labour to *justify* our want of lively hope; but they are all unsound and unacceptable. Hope is established for the sinner in a free and sovereign covenant, it is secured for him in the truth of the Son of God. When first invigorating the soul, it led to an appeal for mercy, *as* a sinner; and if there could be sufficient warrant for this appeal in the beginning, so must there be in the end of pilgrimage, for the foundation of hope is the same. It is therefore more upright, and more our duty to examine into the causes for our depression, with a view to criminate ourselves, rather than the covenant provision, and to be persuaded that such a state can never

exist in a Christian, without something that is materially wrong in his spirit or conduct. Perhaps it arises from mere temptation to unbelief: but this is wholly inconsistent with the method of the great redemption. Or it may spring from relaxation in means and discipline: in this we are exceedingly culpable. Or it may spring from association with the world: this is wholly condemnable. Or we have perhaps committed some trespass, which we do not bring to the blood of sprinkling, or for which we are not sufficiently humbled: this is an awful grieving of the Spirit. No wonder then that hope is depressed, and that instead of going on our way rejoicing, we are continually dejected and sad. But the fault is not in the grace itself, nor in the Lord of the grace; and the proper life of one who is sincerely devoted to God, and living in fellowship with Him, will be that of lively hope and confident expectation. It is, however, a subject of great consolation, and should be one of gratitude, that the Lord's child *cannot* be *deprived* of hope; it is imparted to him as an essential part of his regeneration; and as he who is born of God can never die, so none of those parts, which form his new existence, can be destroyed. Hope may unhappily be buried long in a mass of infirmity, and laid under a load of human inconsistency, but it lives and will work its purifying way, until it appears in

its true and lovely character, enriching and establishing the soul.

Since the Lord is pleased to call us to the possession of this privilege, by causing His glorious gospel to be proclaimed to man, let us labour to meet His call. If at this moment destitute of the privilege, here let us pause, and seriously consider to what inevitable ruin we are tending. The moment must quickly come to us, in which we shall make trial of the nature of our hope, and prove whether it is the guide to endless happiness or woe. Of this let us be assured, all hopes that are unfounded in Christ will perish: they may flatter and deceive, they cannot triumph and prevail: and unless we are in the possession of what Jesus gives, in the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost, our refuges of lies will be swept away, and we must lie down in sorrow. Ere that moment arrives let us be awake to our final concerns, and in the honesty of a subdued mind turn to the *stronghold* as prisoners of hope; a hope that God will acknowledge and crown.

But there are many whose hope is firmly built, and has already outlived many a storm. Have these no positive duty which they should discharge, in order to maintain the liveliness and energy of their privilege? Unquestionably they have; and scriptures assist us in determining what, as believers, we are required to

be and to do: let us look to the word for counsel and uprightly obey. The word of truth should be received, as constituted by the Lord an instrument through which hope may gather increase: it is nourished by the revelation; and the comprehensive view of doctrine, especially of the abounding grace that is treasured up in Christ, will prove establishing to the hope of the soul. He, who would be enriched with this unspeakable blessing, must therefore search the Scriptures, and lay up in his mind and soul those records of eternal life, which are the joy and rejoicing of the upright in heart. Prayer must be diligently observed, the mercy seat ought to be the place of retreat to which the spirit is continually hastening, and since the Lord is always disposed to hearken to the supplications of His people, their supplications ought not to be few. By this means the whole of the inward life is invigorated, and especially hope grows strong and buoyant, by reason of those renewed manifestations of divine favour, which are given in these sacred interviews. Retrospect of the way in which the Lord has hitherto dealt with the soul, will prove another help towards lively hope. The believer should therefore set apart seasons wherein he may take a review of all the path he has trod, marking in each the wonderful dispensations which have been sent to him from his Lord; the mercies experienced during the time of his igno-

rance, and wandering, and sin; the compassions that have followed him since grace first operated in his heart; the interpositions whereby God has constantly rescued, relieved, or upheld the soul in its warfare: all these should form so many subjects of grateful recollection, calling forth hope into vigorous expression of its confidence for days to come. In addition to the remembrance of mercies personally experienced, the communion of saints will open a multiplied demonstration of God's faithfulness; and whilst they are heard recounting what God has wrought for them, renewed assurance will be felt in reference to individual interests; thus we may learn to unite with other means this precious aid gathered from those contributary streams which flow from the experience of our fellow saints. If we are diligent and faithful in following where the Lord leads, we shall find the overflowings of His truth made ours in blest abundance: hope will refresh us with liveliness and joy in the Lord, and we shall glorify Him by a visible gladness in His service. And if we are reluctant, and tardy in our obedience to His voice, let us not be surprised that spiritual consolations are not high in the breast: the fault is our own, and our God remaineth justified and true.

Can we prove from the Scriptures that man is privileged to hope in the Lord?

"It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Lam. iii. 26.

Do the Scriptures testify that Christian hope is a fruit of the Spirit?

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. See also 2 Thess. ii. 16.

Is it revealed that the hope of a believer is founded upon the Divine Name?

"For thou art my hope, O Lord God, Thou art my trust." Psalm lxxi. 5. See also Psalm lxxviii. 5—7. Jer. iii. 23.

Is the genuine hope of a believer founded upon the Divine Name revealed in the Covenant in Christ?

"God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Hope." 1 Tim. i. 1. Also Heb. vi. 19. 1 Pet. i. 3.

Is it necessary to possess this hope through an experimental and living union with Christ?

"Christ in you the hope of glory." Col. i. 27. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

Can we prove from the Scriptures that Chris-

tian hope is operative to produce in the soul an appeal for mercy?

"Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them." Heb. vi. 18. Zech. ix. 12.

Will it encourage to confident expectation of success?

"For an helmet the hope of salvation; for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. v. 8, 9.

Will it put vigour into conflict, &c. during the Christian pilgrimage?

"The Lord will be the hope of His people." Joel iii. 16.

Is it an instrument to purification of heart and life?

"Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." 1 John iii. 3.

Will it generate patient waiting upon God?

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God, from Him cometh my salvation." Psalm lxii. 1.

Does this hope seek for its end the enjoyment of God here and for ever?

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. i. 13.

Will it be satisfied by answerable mercies and visitations from the Lord?

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1.

"The righteous hath hope in his death." Prov. xiv. 32.

"My flesh also shall rest in hope." Psalm xvi. 9. See also Rom. viii. 23—25.

Is it the duty of a Christian to urge upon his soul to rise above depression and to exercise hope?

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, for the help of his countenance." Psalm xlii. 5.

Must he use means towards the growth and establishment of hope in his soul?

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. xv. 4. See also Psalm cxix. 116. Lam. iii. 21. Luke xxiv. 32.

SELFISHNESS.

We are generally aware of what is intended by the term *selfishness:* we know that it describes a disposition which is absorbed in consideration for personal gratification, and that will seek it also at any expence. Most men disclaim it as altogether abhorrent to their mind, and consider the reproach of such a propensity as a foul stigma upon their character, which they resent and are instantly intent upon disproving. How far any man has a *right* to disclaim the charge remains to be proved: and we must endeavour, on the present occasion, to examine into the nature of the disposition itself, and then to bring home the touchstone to our own particular course in life.

In entering upon this subject, however, we must be careful not to confound selfishness with *self-love,* properly so called; for whilst an inordinate value for self is accursed, a legitimate love for self is enjoined: and, indeed, we must consider this affection *requisite* to man, in order that he may discharge the obligations which

are upon him as God's creature. It is evident that self-love is a law of nature, for all creatures seek their own good; and that it is a law in *our* nature also, for without it self-preservation would not be sought; and unquestionably it was implanted in man in his creation, that he might become the vigilant guardian of his own body and soul. In addition to this law, the Creator endowed him with those senses which still further administer to his safety, by forewarning him of danger, and teaching him to avoid what might prove destructive to his mortal life. Nor is there any lack of provision for the care of the immortal soul, seeing God has given to man a conscience, and faculties, by which he is warned of those things which will destroy his soul, and carries about with him a constant monitor, urging him to pursue those things which would tend to his final happiness. When man is negligent of this duty, he is charged by the Lord with guilt, his transgressions are described as deeds which demonstrate that he is fallen from the proper law of his nature: thus it is written, "But he that sinneth against me *wrongeth his own soul*, all they that hate me *love death*;" Prov. viii. 36. So long as man was innocent, this disposition was one of his greatest mercies: it was calculated to awaken him to the value of his body as the workmanship of the Lord, and as ordained to be partaker of pure and eternal blessedness, and it was a powerful motive to the

care and nourishment of the never-dying immortal soul, which is the noblest part of man, and reserved for a region full of awful displays of the divine glory. When properly in action, it could not interfere with any relative obligation, for man dwelling in God dwelled in love, and he who loved God must necessarily love his brother also: but now alas! the circumstances of man being changed by the fall, he is not capable of answering this original law of his creation until he is regenerate, and by the power of the life-giving Spirit of holiness, restored to his primitive ability of glorifying God, and living to the end for which he was created. Until this change takes place, all men are selfish; they retain the principle of self-love, but, like every other faculty and affection of man's soul, it is wholly corrupted; it is now a degenerate plant, and instead of being directed to produce fruits which may glorify God and benefit the soul, it bears only the poisonous berry, and is one of the most baneful productions of fallen nature. Let us not suppose that we are any of us innocent of this guilt, we are all of one degenerate nature, and selfishness is so inseparably a part of that nature, that there is not a thought, a desire, a pursuit, a connexion in life, that is not in some degree mixed with this corruption; it is either the motive or end of our actions, or it subtlely works in our feelings, our pleasures, or our fears; and a little candid inquiry, into the seve-

ral movements of our hearts, will soon ascertain to us all, that selfishness defiles us, and that we have reason to be abased before God. Although it does not at all times appear visibly and prominently, so that others may find it easy to detect our sin, it may be searched out by our own minds, if we will uprightly undertake the investigation: and since it is highly important and necessary, in order to the destruction of the bitter root, we ought not to shrink from the painful undertaking. Especially let us sift those actions which wear the garb of *disinterestedness*: there are many such by which perhaps we are exalted in the eyes of men as patterns of liberality, self-denial, and generous feeling, when in these very actions God can discover hypocrisy, and looking to their *spring* and *rise* will proclaim them to be altogether *selfish*. We have many examples of this description recorded in the Scriptures: let us select three for the present occasion.

What is the opinion which we form of the old prophet, who lived in Bethel, at the time when the man of God was sent to denounce judgment upon Jeroboam? He followed after him with apparent courtesy and friendly affection, he entreated him to accept his hospitality and to refresh himself under his roof; when the Lord visited him with awful rebuke and slew him in the way, he uttered the cry of seeming brotherly anguish, "Alas! my brother!" and when he

spoke of his death, enjoined his sons to bury his bones with those of the man of God. Was all this *friendship*, hospitality, sympathy, zeal? Look to the spring for the reply: he was a liar, and a vile hypocrite, who made a *trade* of his religion: he hoped to increase his own importance by a seeming connexion with one who had performed a miracle, and whose denunciations were sure to come to pass: and thus his object was to establish his own iniquitous traffic; like Balaam of old, he "loved the wages of unrighteousness," and all this apparent courtesy was in fact the vilest selfishness. The same may be said of Jehoram, King of Israel, who though an idolater, and determinately opposed to the interests of Jehovah, thought it expedient to court the friendship of Jehovah's servants; he invited Jehoshaphat, he consulted his judgment, he submitted to his counsel, and could even stand before God's prophet with an appeal;—but what moved him to these expressions? He desired to strengthen his army by the addition of the hosts of Judah, he wished to ingratiate himself with a man who had it in his power to aid his king- dom- and he was solicitous to be delivered from a difficulty out of which he could not deliver himself. Selfishness prompted him in the whole of these measures. Turning to the Gospel, we find a memorable example of the existence of this sordid and corrupt spring. When Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with ointment, Judas

exclaimed, "why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" Here was an appearance of prudence, of charity, and sympathy, yet we are told, "this he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." Selfishness dictated the wish, and moved him to the expression. Thus we are counselled, through Scripture history, to beware of that leaven, by which the whole of our course may be corrupted, and to give the soul diligently to the use of every opportunity, by which we may have a clear inspection of our motives and our deeds.

We may now proceed to inquire into the various ways in which this sin is demonstrated, either in the temporal concerns of life, or in the interests of a religious profession.

There is in some men an inordinate desire after increase of wealth, or personal accommodation, or honour, and for these objects they will trample upon every law both of God and man; nothing is to be put in competition with their convenience or their aggrandizement; and if their favourite scheme, or prospect, cannot be insured by fair means, they will not scruple to adopt any measure, however iniquitous and unjust. Thus Ahab, although a king possesing empire, riches, honour, and every worldly glory that he could reasonably desire, coveted

Naboth's vineyard. It lay conveniently for him, and he longed to possess it as a garden of herbs: this he could not do without tempting Naboth to break the law of the Jewish kingdom, by selling his landed property, and when he proposed this temptation in vain, and had no resource but one, even the murder of Naboth, this was no barrier to his selfish desires, nor did he hesitate to tread on the despised laws of God, and the murdered innocent Naboth, in order to go down to the vineyard, and seize it as his possession: selfishness hurried him on the accursed way. Nor less conspicuous is the same disposition in Ziba, and in Gehazi, men who had many motives which might have restrained them from their way of sin, but in both cases selfishness prevailed, leading in Ziba to base and lying efforts, to impose upon David, and to the sin of calumniating his master, to whom he owed all his wealth and possessions, being intent upon occupying the place which Mephibosheth filled, and of supplanting a righteous man: in Gehazi, to a wicked invention, in which he cared not for any dishonour upon God which might have followed his mercenary demand, but sought only to grasp at the worldly possessions of which he flattered himself he should by this means speedily become the master. Too many there are in this world, who have the same mind, and who in their particular sphere of action demon-

trate the same self-seeking, and in a similar manner trample upon the claims of honour, honesty, and truth.

It is a disposition evidenced also in domestic life and in the common intercourse of the world. In some persons selfishness turns upon the favour, smiles, and approval of the creature; these are coveted, and must be obtained, however the success may involve other sacred considerations: a spirit of rivalry, of envy, and malice prevails, self moving to consider every thing which militates against personal superiority either as an infringement upon its own right, or an intolerable interference with its desires; and, in consequence, the affections, desires, and feelings of others are not consulted—all these must lay prostrate before this domineering self. And here let it be remarked, that parents are frequently instrumental to the furtherance of this evil amongst their children, by partiality, false indulgence, and pampering the vanity and the appetites of their favourites, by which wicked indulgence they become more overbearing, and are finally the slaves of self, and the burden and curse of society.

Sometimes this disposition is betrayed by a resolve to seek personal gratification, even at the expense of the support of a family. There are many men, who, in order to gratify their taste for pleasure, for drunkenness, for gambling, or any other lust of the heart, will not scruple

to expend the money which is necessary to provide bread for their wives and children, and who have no feeling or conscience towards those who are left at home to suffer hunger and nakedness, and who have to contend with contracted debts and miseries, brought upon them by the selfishness of him from whom they have a right to expect support and comfort. There are others who commit the same offence by indulging their idle self, who will not work, or give the attention necessary to secular concerns, and who, in consequence, involve others with themselves in ruin. Thus, in every rank and station, a selfish spirit is too often *visible*, and in every heart worketh in its measure; for there is a continual propensity to consult for *self* in all these situations, and to listen to its clamorous voice, or insidious reasonings, until the whole current of interest runs in this filthy and unclean channel.

Not unfrequently this selfish propensity is evinced on occasion of those arguments or disputes which arise amongst men. It very rarely occurs that we are disposed candidly to consider truth, or humbly to confess error: on the contrary, self rises up in arms when it is opposed, and particularly when it is *charged*, and in the heat of emotion occasioned by this selfishness, the most cruel recrimination takes place, and frequently the most unjust misrepresentations and accusations; thus proving, how awfully we

inherit the nature of our fallen parent, and how constantly we feel and demonstrate the same spirit, which, instead of admitting self-conviction and shame, exclaims—" the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she tempted me, and I did eat ; " casting the blame of our transgression upon any, rather than suffer an assault upon self.

In those interests which are more peculiarly belonging to a religious profession, the same evil may in too many instances prevail. How many persons are induced to enter into such a profession, only on account of some present advantage, which they hope to obtain through this medium. The reproach that is attendant upon a spiritual devotion to Christ does not equally follow upon a merely strict external attention to certain orders and rules of religion, and there are times when Christianity becomes in a measure a fashionable study : this is more especially the case, when persons of rank or influence embrace the truth with fervent zeal : many may, under this influence, be induced to adopt the same line of conduct, seeking thus to elevate themselves, and to open the way for higher connexions or stations in the world. How frequently do we see this exemplified in men who, having no further purpose to pursue by religion, and being providentially removed from this circle of acquaintance, resume their former

habits, and are as irreligious and earthly in conduct as other ungodly men: and how much is this the case with children, dependents, and servants, who desire to be esteemed religious with the religious, so long as under an authority by which they are advantaged, but, losing this selfish motive, cease to wear even the semblance of a serious profession. It is evident that where such is the result, the miserable sinner has been making religion his passport to earthly enjoyments, and that he has been governed by Selfishness, and not by faith in God.

It may be done also when the conscience becomes a troublesome reprover, or when the prospect of eternity brings some serious alarm upon the soul. A fear that is taught by the precept of men, or which arises from illumination of the understanding without affecting the heart, will frequently produce a partial conformity to the divine precept, by which it is hoped that the pains of hell may be mitigated, and the alarms of conscience assuaged. The soul may be utterly destitute of any genuine faith or fear under all this apparent feeling, and the earnest expressions, which occasionally burst from the lips, may mean nothing more than a terrified desire of escaping impending evil. *Self* is the motive of action, there being no love of God's glory, and no solicitude for spiritual conformity to Him, and the scanty works and

reformation that are professed are for the purpose of providing some anodyne, by which the mind may be soothed into peace.

The delusion may extend yet further, in persons who have naturally an ardour of disposition, and are endowed with mental talent. God is pleased sometimes to distinguish his creatures by a more than ordinary degree of intellectual vigour: they possess a certain power of imagination, a vividness of thought, and a grasp of understanding, which raises them into a capability of leading a multitude, or of dazzling the wondering minds of beholders: to display this brilliancy of mind is their object, and if the profession of religion promises to afford greater facilities for this object, they will seize upon this in preference to any other mode, but from no other consideration than that hereby they may find an opportunity to show forth their superiority of talent, loving to have the pre-eminence, and being deeply corrupted by Selfishness.

Others will bring this abomination even into their professed approaches to the throne of grace: they believe it their duty to be engaged in prayer,—they encourage themselves to fulfil this duty from the expectation that they shall derive pleasureable feelings from the exercise: in proportion to the power they have of stirring up violent emotion, of shedding tears, and of feeling that they have had their passions ex-

cited, they have satisfaction in the season of prayer:—they derive not their enjoyment from views of Jehovah, from approaches to the Cross of Jesus, or from any solid ground of hope that the divine presence is extended towards them; but only from the corrupt source of their *own* emotions. This disposition is equally prevalent with such persons in other means of grace:—meetings, sermons, reading the Scriptures, are all insipid and tasteless, unless there has been somewhat conveyed to them, which particularly accords with their views and expectations; there is no enlargement of heart towards the interests of other men; and all is to them barren and wearisome, which comes not as a cordial to their own particular state. Such persons are wholly Selfish, and the Lord reproaches the condition as unprofitable and hateful, saying, "Israel is an *empty* vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto *himself*."

How many are there also, who will cheerfully accompany the Christian on pilgrimage, so long as the pathway seems flowery, and the sky serene: they enjoy the society of the meek and sympathetic believer, because it contributes to their individual comfort, and they have no objection to the discussion of truths, wherein the happiness of an immortal soul and the privileges of the redeemed are disclosed; but should a reverse be threatened, should the sky gather blackness and indicate an approaching storm,

or the highway become more exalted and difficult than was at first apprehended, immediately they start back from the danger and toil, and return to their fellowship with the world. When they joined company with the believer, they did not calculate upon persecution, they did not look for shame, and they thought they might be excused labour: so long as this dream lasted, all was well with them; but no sooner is it dispersed, than their judgment is wholly changed, and the strictness of spiritual devotion is evil in their opinion. Thus they give evidence that they were influenced to their transient profession by selfishness, having no real and disinterested fellowship of soul with the saints of God.

We may observe this corrupt leaven working very subtlely, at some times, in persons who may appear to be greatly devoted to the Lord. Self may be concealed under great zeal and punctuality under outward means, and is unquestionably very prevailing when opportunities of this description are *engrossed* without any disposition to accommodate others, or to give the same refreshment to other branches of the family. It will frequently occur that domestic duties may interfere with the privilege of some members of the household, unless others will charitably bear the burden for them, and thus set them at liberty to frequent the ordinances of God: when this is refused, or when it is done

reluctantly, Selfishness is very prevalent in the heart; for it is a cruel indifference to the necessities of a fellow-sinner, or to the enjoyment of a fellow-saint, and is far from the disposition of genuine piety. Yet how frequently are mothers totally confined by attention to their children, servants by the particular situations they occupy in the family, and others by attendance upon the sick and dying, when, were there a disinterested spirit, the bread might be shared, and each become more established and healthy, by participation in the blessing of such means. Whilst these are highly culpable, let not such as are necessarily deprived of such opportunities murmur and complain, nor envy the privilege which another can enjoy: here would be a Selfishness equally hateful in the sight of God, and contrary to the proper mind of a Christian: we should rejoice in the privileges of our brother, and meekly submit to providential hindrances.

Selfishness is many times an evil that will betray itself by egotism. Are there not innumerable examples of professors, who seem to consider *themselves* the most interesting theme which they can propose to their companions or friends?—Their own experiences, their own trials, their times of spiritual enjoyment, what they have encountered in the path of duty, their own particular labours, vineyard, people, plans; these totally engross them, they are brought

forward in every conversation, and upon all occasions others are expected to listen with an equal degree of delight to that which they experience; and if the thread of their detail is broken, and any other topic, or labour, or experience is introduced, the whole *outward* man exhibits the listlessness of a wearied mind, and demonstrates that when *self* was laid aside by the company, interest in the conversation ceased.

We may present one more instance of the power of this baneful disposition, which probably we shall have had frequent opportunity to remark.—There is in some persons a great reluctancy to admit painful feelings into the breast: they are perhaps naturally, and also by grace, exceedingly susceptible, and they have already endured much from the excitement of their sympathies: this has induced a certain degree of alarm, when any thing like a demand upon their feelings is made, and they resolve to shut up their affections in their own breast, and to encase themselves as it were by assumed indifference and inattention to the tale of woe: the sound of a sorrowful experience, or of deep conflicts, or of times of bereavement and desolation, is to them like the approach of some thief or murderer, that is to rob them of a proportion of their own ease and quiet, and they instantly endeavour to repel it, and to turn away from the subject of distress. This is

Selfish; it evinces an inordinate and absorbing desire for personal repose, and a heart that is not sufficiently affected by the religion that is professed: for the Christian faith prohibits this *seeking of our own*, and calls upon the believer to open his heart as a lodging-place for the weary, and to give his sympathies as a cordial to the fainting.

By those who are accustomed to read human nature, and to examine the movements of their own hearts, possibly other instances of the workings of Selfishness will be added to those which are presented in these pages; but whether or not, here stands sufficient to provide us with subjects upon which to search out our own spirits diligently, and with humility before God. In all the instances mentioned, the soul is living contrary to the Gospel of Christ: such a man lives to himself, and not to Him who died and rose again that we should live unto God; and it is a course which, being independant of claims most sacred, must eventually bring ruin upon the soul. Our own part should therefore be, to strive after a thorough disgust of dispositions, that are not only our ruin but our shame; and, in order to this, we should present before us the great motives that may operate a change of character.

In the great and blessed example presented to man in the Gospel of Life, we have the pat-

tern of what we should love and aspire after. Jesus Christ is not only our Redeemer and Lord, but He is also the standard of excellence to which we are in our measure to be conformed: and although we cannot reach to His perfection, we are required *to be in this world as He was,* cultivating the same mind and course. In this example no *Selfishness* appears—all is disinterested, self-denying, and full of the expression of voluntary sympathy to man; and in this grace it is that all our mercies are ensured, for without it we everlastingly die. And can we as Christians be satisfied to live short of this conformity, presented to us as our duty, as our privelege, and enforced by so many affecting and endeared considerations? Rather let us set the Lord before us each step of our way, and labour to draw a correct line when we are professing to copy his steps. This course will prove exceedingly beneficial to our own peace, whilst it administers to the peace of others also; for in the exercise of this mind the greatest spiritual delights abound, and God is well pleased; for He loves the sympathies that arise out of an experimental knowledge of Himself, and will double the joy of the heart that thus lives in His spirit and law. We profess to desire His favour, let this be one of the evidences which we give of sincerity; and not only let vigilance be directed towards our own particular state, but here again guard against

Selfishness:—look to the state of those with whom we are associated; faithfully and tenderly address the word of counsel and warning where it is requisite; wherever we discern any thing like a Selfish principle working in friend or associate, put our finger upon it, and point it out to observation, that it may be mortified; and particularly let children be subjects of holy solicitude,—that this native weed, so awfully prevailing, as it usually does, in their earliest habits and affections, may be patiently and laboriously mortified and checked, through parental authority or affectionate zeal.

Not to yield attention to these preceptive counsels, is to sin against our own mercies: and if we intend to retain a Christian profession, we ought to remember, that this will not be of an availing character, without the axe is laid to the root of self. A selfish man cannot be considered a true Christian,—he has the first initiatory lesson yet to learn; and a selfish *professor* lays open to the most disgraceful and inconsistent course: he may be any thing that Selfishness, and the Devil acting upon this corruption, may choose to make him: he is prepared to be a time-server, a hypocrite, and for one morsel of meat would at any time sell his birthright: surely this should awaken an alarm, and rouse to give heed to the things which we hear. After all, however, the eye and heart must be lifted to the mercy seat: no power

short of Omnipotence can savingly deliver us; and we must ask the operation of the Holy Ghost, that by Him we may be renewed in the spirit of our mind. He is the Almighty God, whose grace and power can conform us to the Divine requirement; and by Him, miserable sinners, that are in bondage to self, are liberated and blest with new and holy life. Here is our encouragement—"all things are possible" unto God. And if we will cry unto Him, and deal uprightly with Him, He will cause us to know the grace of the Covenant, bringing us back to primitive energies: *true self-love* shall then abound, leading us to cultivate the mind of our Lord; and true *self-denial* shall then triumph, strengthening us to live above the evil nature, so that we shall each one seek his brother's good.

Let us prove from the word of God that self-love is a law of our nature, implanted by God, and directing to self-preservation.

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it." Eph. v. 29.

Can we prove that Selfishness is self-love degenerated, leading a man to seek his own good, without respect to God's glory, or the benefit of fellow-men?

"For all seek their own, not the things which

are Jesus Christ's." Phil. ii. 21. See also 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2.

Is this a corruption that belongs to all men as sinners?

"The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." James iv. 5.

Does it always appear conspicuously, or is it covered on some occasions by the mark of seeming disinterestedness?

"Then saith one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray Him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag." John xii. 5, 6. See also 1 Kings xiii. 15, 31. 2 Kings iii. 8.

Let us prove that Selfishness will be betrayed in temporal or worldly transactions and situations.

"And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house." 1 Kings xxi. 2. See also 2 Sam. xvi. 1. 2 Kings v. 22. 1 Sam. i. 6, 7. Gen. iii. 12.

Can it equally be proved that this sin may prevail in a religious profession?

"Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself." Hosea x. i. See also Isa. i. 23. 3 John ix. 2 Pet. ii. 15. Matt. xxi. 34. Exod. x. 16. Acts viii. 24. Matt. xxiii. 5—7. John vi. 26. Ezek. xxxiv. 18, 19. Luke x. 40. Acts v. 2.

Is this sin hateful in God's sight, and contrary to the Christian doctrine and requirement?

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Matt xvi. 24. See also Phil. ii. 4—6.

SELF-DENIAL.

We are now to inquire into the disposition that is opposed to the sin of selfishness: it may be styled self-denial, or disinterestedness, and signifies a readiness of mind to forego some personal gratification, or to deny some passion of nature, on the account of a motive that appears of sufficient importance to take the lead in the choice, and to determine the mind upon the sacrifice of its own inclination.

There is a power in the unrenewed mind to make great sacrifices, when a sufficient motive is presented; and we find examples around us perpetually, of persons who will encounter the most surprising hardships or seasons of trial, for the end of administering to some favourite object, which engrosses the mind. Thus the mother will deprive herself of rest, of refreshment, exhaust her frame, and refuse no fatigue, for the sake of watching over the sick bed of her child, and in the hope of ministering some support or relief to the beloved sufferer. So

also we may observe persons of benevolent dispositions, moved by the existence of misery and distress, induced to suffer many personal privations, and to forego many pleasurable schemes, merely for the sake of possessing greater facilities for the impartation of succour to the needy. And others, who are animated by a love for their country, will expose themselves to hardships, proffer their services, and sacrifice their lives, for the sake of delivering their land from oppression, or of establishing their fellow-countrymen in peace and liberty. These, and other instances of a similar description, are valuable so far as they extend, and we ought to give them the tribute of our acknowledgment; but let us not confound these acts with the disposition of *Christian* self-denial: examine them, and it will be found that, excellent as they are in reference to the condition which they embrace, they are defective in two very important qualities—they have nothing in them *of God*, and they have not the spirit of impartiality. The motive inducing to these acts is wholly destitute of faith: they are discharged either in obedience to some powerful passion of the breast, or because duty and character before men are involved in the course that is taken: and they are limited in their application, being confined to that particular object which engrosses the attention, whilst upon any other ground the disposition is found as selfish as that

of any other unregenerate man. We admit that these acts are not left without any reward, but it is a reward in kind; the Lord permits that a certain degree of satisfaction should arise from the consciousness of disinterested or self-denying feeling: but the enjoyment is selfish in its character, and even under the appearance of great disinterestedness it will be found, upon examination, that a tribute is given to *self*, by which complacency in the deed, in the endurance, and in the disposition, is increased. This therefore is not the self-denial, required and described as belonging to the regenerate.

Christian self-denial is not the production of *nature*, it is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and wrought in the soul by the divine purpose of God, according to His own covenant mercy: yet the Lord operates upon his people by a certain order, best calculated for rational creatures; and although He requires implicit obedience to His command, He is pleased to commend His commands, and to present them in such a form as shall justify and exalt them before men. He therefore presents the call to self-denial in connexion with certain motives, which shall propose a cause adequate to induce the believer to comply, and to take up his cross, and deny himself.

The motives are three.

First, The glory of the divine name. It is suggested to the soul, that the glory of God

demands the service of the creature: it is reasonable to conclude that the Creator has a right to enforce this claim; how much more when He stands before the soul in the character of a Redeemer. Having purchased and died for the sinner, it must needs appear righteous, that He should demand His own purchase, and thus the motive is powerfully enforced, Thou art bought with a price, no more thine own, wherefore *glorify God* in your spirit and in your body, which are God's. Do it in the habitual demonstration of a grateful heart, carrying this principle into every action and into all undertakings, so that whether ye eat or drink ye may do all to the *glory* of God; knowing the Christian privilege which is proclaimed, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live we live unto the Lord, and whether we die we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's." Upon this foundation the Lord establishes a motive that shall prevail, in the several particular acts of mortification to which the believer may be called, and it is sufficient to say, The glory of God requires thy obedience in *this* particular.

The second motive is derived from the legitimate love of self, which consults for the best interests of body and soul. The comparative insignificance of time with eternity, the contemptibleness of the enjoyments of the flesh

when put in competition with the delights that are spiritual, the danger attendant upon a life of present carnal ease, and the safety of living in habits of mortification, are made subjects of serious consideration: upon this ground the Lord appeals, not only in reference to the habitual course of a Christian, but also on each occasion wherein he is required to deny the flesh and to take up his cross. Thus he seems to say, What art thou profited though thou gain the whole world and lose thy soul? and, "It is better to enter into life halt or maimed, than having two eyes or two hands to be cast into hell fire." There is also the engagement of love and mercy, upon which the soul is led to turn the grateful recollection. Christ has assured his people that no man has left father, mother, &c. for his sake, but shall receive manifold more: the sacrifice of things present will be followed by consequent treasure in things future, and the sufferings encountered in obedience to Christ will be compensated by the divine consolations which He pledges Himself to bestow. Thus the Lord may seem to say, Deny thyself, sacrifice this gratification of the flesh, the spiritual prosperity of thy soul demands it.

The third motive is found in that relative zeal and affection, which is inseparable from the heart of a believer. The present comfort and prosperity of others, and the salvation of their never dying soul, are interests that such

an one embraces with unfeigned sympathy. There are occasions wherein these interests call for individual sacrifices from those who embrace them: when this is the case, the Lord appeals to the principle, setting before the soul the danger that may accrue to a brother, if such and such things are indulged; the loss that may come upon the soul of a sinner by the allowance of what is to him a stumbling-block; or the advantage that will on the contrary be experienced by others, if the believer has zeal enough to forego his own particular gratification for this cause; so that the word of requirement seems thus addressed, Here is the soul of thy brother, here are the interests and happiness of thy fellow creatures, canst thou for these deny thyself, and drop thy schemes for personal delights? Hast thou a heart to embrace the gospel exhortation, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth?"

It will immediately be perceived, that motives such as these carry no force in them to the heart of a natural man: he is destitute of zeal for the glory of God, he has no abiding care for his own immortal soul, and he knows nothing of those sympathies which can prefer these interests of a brother to his own: and were these considerations proffered to an unregenerate sinner, they would be utterly contemned. God understands His own excellent and glorious work, and will not fail to accomplish all that is

necessary to ensure its success, therefore when these motives are made the ground of plea with His creature, He first imparts to that creature a preparation of heart which shall render them availing. By an act of sovereign grace, He enters into the sinner's alienated and selfish soul, and by His own omnipotent love casts down the strong holds of Satan, and disposes the affections to consent to the motives proposed: He fills the heart with love for the divine glory; He sanctifies the will and brings it to embrace the soul's safety; He enlarges the mind, and enables it to comprehend in its dearest interests the welfare of men: and all this by the constraining sense of that love of Christ which has abounded in His dying pains, and glorious resurrection, and through which he is laid under obligation to live to Him, 2 Cor. v. 13—15.

We may now proceed to consider the manifestation of this divine existence, as exhibiting the state opposed to selfishness. In every one of those particulars wherein, by nature, man lives to himself, the Christian will be found, by grace, to live unto God: and it will be interesting to us to perceive how evidently the three motives which have been described run through his affections and his practice, both in things natural and spiritual.

The selfish man grasps at the riches, the honours, and gains of this world, being intent

upon the gratification which they will procure, and will seize them at any expense of another's prosperity. Not so the disinterested believer: to him the great things of this world are become indifferent; he has no desire for these, farther than as they may be providentially bestowed for the purpose of glorifying the Giver. As it respects personal indulgences, he ceases to covet what earth can propose; he therefore discharges his transactions in the world with a disinterested spirit, demonstrating visibly that he is delivered from this "*thick clay*." At once we perceive how much this disposition accords with the motives which are prevalent in his soul. God is glorified, for it becomes evident that His children find a sufficient portion in Himself, that they can also trust His word of promise, and with the spirit of Abraham be content to give up the possessions of this world and sit loose to its gains, esteeming the service of the Lord, with all its reproach from men, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; proving also that they have been enabled to rest in the lot appointed by God: they can exclaim, with the Apostle, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content; I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need."

The experience of the soul is greatly advanced

by this indifference to earthly possessions; it is thus that the mind is kept in recollection of the transitory nature of things present, and is brought into feelings that correspond with the conviction of the judgment. God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom He has promised, and this truth is embodied in the most powerful experience of its excellency, by the mind that lives above the distinctions of time.

That others receive benefit through this channel is undeniable. As it respects this world, it follows of course, that in proportion to the disinterestedness of a man in his dealings, he enriches those with whom he deals; when ready to forego his own claims, or to consult for the advantage of a brother, he contributes in that measure to the greater good of another. Thus we find Jonathan exemplifying this truth, when he was satisfied to yield the pre-eminence to David, saying, "Fear not, thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." And in Mephibosheth, also, an example of this description appears, when he was willing to suffer loss in his worldly substance, although unjustly wrested from him, so long as peace and general harmony might be preserved. This disposition will extend a further benefit to men, for it holds forth a true light directive of men's paths, and is a shining testimony to the nature and elevation of the Christian life.

The selfish man is intent upon absorbing the affections and smiles of the creature, he delights in being chief, and has no regard to the comfort or desires of another, when put in comparison with his own exaltation. The disinterested man, although grateful for the affection and the comforts extended to him through this medium, is willing to forego the possession, if the requirement can be justified upon any of the three motives which are the rule of his judgment. In this respect he is possessed of an indifference to the smiles of the creature; and whatever may be the clamour of natural passions, he is empowered to hush them into peace by these higher considerations.

The end is answered, for it is manifest that God is glorified hereby: it is much to His praise, when the power of natural feeling is reduced, and made subservient to His will: nor is there any occasion in which the excellency of His grace is more conspicuously displayed than in the prostration of these affections at His feet. It was an excellent operation in the soul of Ezekiel, when the Lord, who knew the measure of his grace, proved him, saying, "Son of man, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke, yet neither shalt thou mourn, nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down: forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and

cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men." The effect was produced by Him who had subdued the natural passions of his soul, and it is added, "So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died, *and I did in the morning as I was commanded.*" Similar requirements may still be made, not always in the death, but sometimes in the loss or change of the affections, or in the withholding of the token of regard from those we love; and God is magnified, when the believer can evince, that notwithstanding such trials, he can rejoice in the fulness of that inexhaustible Ocean, whence he derives his dearest possessions, and that amidst changing scenes and dying friends God is to him all in all.

His own soul receives an unspeakable blessing through this means; in such seasons he realizes the crucifixion of the flesh with the affections and lusts; he becomes spiritualized, and his soul is even as a weaned child, the idolatrous tendency of his nature receives a powerful check, and he becomes less solicitous for comfort in created streams, and less expectant of enjoyment from the broken cisterns of this world: he is willing to relinquish them, and he is satisfied that whether the trial comes upon him, or is met and embraced by him, it is for good, and that he may be more conformed to the divine will.

His fellow-sinners receive another testimony

from this disposition, which proclaims the victory of faith, and are benefited hereby. Sometimes also the individual loss which he suffers proves a gain to another: the smile he loses falls on another, the token of favour and affection which he has a natural desire to engross is given to a brother; in this appointment his brother is rendered happy, and yet more so when the surrender is made without complaint, and the disinterested soul can be satisfied in the enjoyments that are by this means promoted in the breast of his fellow creature.

In the common concerns of life there are many occasions, wherein the selfish are hurried into sin, and become the exciting cause of transgression in others, by the resentful passions and the self-justifying pride by which they are governed. With the self-denying a very different line of conduct is pursued: these, when exposed to calumny, reproach, or accusation, are under the rule of the three motives mentioned, and although disposed naturally to plead their own cause, and to altercate with their adversary, remember that by grace they are privileged to feel and to act by different principles. They therefore submit their cause, and putting a bridle upon their tongue, are intent upon restraining the tide of sin that follows where the spirit of resentment is unrestrained.

The Lord is glorified; it is manifest that He

lifts his child above the swellings of an ungodly world, and above the power of an evil and proud nature: it is manifest that His people find somewhat in Him which compensates for the injustice, &c. of the world, and that they can confide in Him as an omniscient and righteous Judge, they prove that they can rest upon His faithfulness, and wait His time for the vindication of their name, knowing that He will arise and execute judgment for them. Self is restrained and God is magnified.

The advantage to the soul is great, one of the most difficult parts of Christian life is discharged, and by it strengthened into stronger habit. Naturally, a man is disposed instantly to resent an affront, to revenge himself for an injury, and violently to justify himself; but when grace gets the victory, the soul is established in simplicity, and grows in the power of saying upon all these occasions, "With me it is a very small matter to be judged of you, or of man's judgment."—"He that judgeth me is the Lord."

In many important ways, the souls, and the comfort of others, are interested in this conduct. By a readiness to bear reproach, even when unjustly charged, possibly a fellow-creature is less criminated, and one not so able to bear the calumny escapes under the cover of him who receives the stigma. Sometimes, also, much mischief is prevented; a resentful investigation

of the affair might involve many in painful circumstances, whereas a patient forbearance preserves peace to them; many also might be led into temptation and fall into further sin, by increased misrepresentation, anger, and injustice, whilst a submissive acceptance of the wrong preserves the way from these snares, and proves a safeguard, not only to the injured, but to those who have been guilty of the injury. Thus by leaving the cause with God, mercy triumphs, and faith and charity are commended, and advanced.

Nor is the spirit of self-denial and disinterestedness confined to these relative situations: we may trace it through the whole spiritual fellowship of the soul with God, and shall see how the real believer differs in the spirit of his profession, from such as take upon them the name of God for selfish purposes.

Unlike to the self-seeker, the regenerate man makes his profession from motives of *love*. It is true, *self-love*, in its legitimate character, must necessarily be in action, for the child seeks the parents' smile, and the weary desires a rest to his soul; but these are not so exclusively the motive, as to be the sole cause of his profession,—his affections appreciate the Lord, and with ardent zeal desire that He should have His creature, and be glorified in His wonderful work of redemption. Animated by

this principle, his own advancement and honor are subordinate, so that he is content to take the *lowest* seat if so the Lord appoints; he is ready to follow Him through the loss of all things if this be required; he is ready to suffer whatever may be laid upon him, if God's hand be engaged in the dispensation; and even if distressed by conviction, conflict, and spiritual endurance, he will not object to the pathway on this account; his great desire being that God may be magnified, he leaves the choice of the *manner* to God's own sovereignty, and through genuine love is enabled to say with disinterested and self-denying devotion, "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"—and not loving his life even unto death, to adventure in the way where Jesus leads, and where God's name is glorified.

In the soul's approaches to the mercy seat the same spirit will prevail. It may be that the Lord is pleased greatly to exercise him, by seeming to shut out his prayer, and to be inattentive to his wants, but this does not drive him from the throne of grace, which he knows to be his duty and believes to be his privilege to approach—on this account he would continue to pray; but there is also a kind of necessity, in the tendency of his affections, to seek this place of retreat; and even when uncheered by the divine manifestations, he finds a sacred, though mournful delight in pouring

out his griefs into the bosom of the Lord; he is satisfied that He cannot but be just, and that He is infinitely wise, he believes that if it is good He will in due time listen to, and answer his prayer; and as he does not pray merely for the enjoyment of high and gratifying frames and feelings, therefore day and night he bends his knee, and continues a wrestler with the Lord.

When directing his mind to the consideration of those glorious interests of Christ, by which the world is to be blest, and sinners brought into the experience of pardon and peace, he feels a correspondent solicitude for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom: on this account he ponders the way of his feet, and inquires where he may direct his paths towards the promotion of this cause; if he has talent, he longs to use it, and would fain have gifts by which to plead successfully the name of Jesus; but, possibly, his gifts are very few, or small in value, he is not disheartened hereby, his *one* talent is laid out for God: or he may have none of a public character, and be constrained to limit his expression of zeal within the boundary of prayer and example, nevertheless *others* have gifts, in this he rejoices, he sees thé work prosper in their hands, he hears of the attraction that is felt towards some brother labouring in the vineyard, his heart danceth within him, for Jesus is riding prosperously and fulfilling his will. It is no offence to his disinterested soul

that the greater honor is bestowed upon another he did not desire to work that he might display his *own* zeal, gifts, &c. but that the cross of Christ might be exalted, if he sees the standard lifted high and beholds the multitudes flock to the banner, he does not murmur because it is reared by other hands than his own, but simply rejoices in the result, satisfied to leave it with God to choose His own instruments to this end.

This disposition will necessarily lead to the exercise of sympathy: he is not like the selfish man, who shuts up his heart from the miseries of another, lest his own enjoyments should be depressed: he does not endeavour to blunt his sensibilities, and to steel his soul against the cry of the wretched, or the conflicts of the Christian, but with disinterested affection will deny himself of some hours of ease, if by so doing he may mitigate the sorrows of the afflicted, or share the burden of the weary: his heart is open to receive the communications that may be made, it is equally open to impart the counsel or comfort that sympathy may afford, and whatever may be required of bodily exertion, of mental application, of use of influence, or of oneness of feeling, it is promptly imparted or put forth. The self-denying will, from this sympathetic disposition, be willing also to share opportunities for hearing and enjoying the means of grace: he will be ready, in this respect, to break his bread with the hungry, and to seek that others may

participate in spiritual refreshments: nor will he listen to the selfish reasonings, and pleas, of an evil heart, that would prompt him to relax in his life of simplicity, but rather resolve so to live in the spirit as to count all things but loss that he may win Christ, and so to consult for the true welfare of another as to be ready to forego even things lawful if they are not expedient, determining—"Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Thus we may clearly perceive, that the supernatural life of a Christian embraces the most powerful motives of action, and reaches to the most surprising attainments of spirituality; and that, in those sacred concerns laying between his own soul and the eternal God, every consideration that is the most joyous and exciting is proposed and ensured: by the disinterestedness of the profession that he makes, angels and men have opportunity to contemplate with admiring wonder what the Holy Spirit can accomplish in the miserable region of a sinner's heart. In the possession of this disinterestedness, he carries within his own heart the most exhilarating evidence of the new creation, and lives in the enjoyment of the Spirit's inward witness; and by this course he travels through the wilderness, scattering blessings and mercies where he goes, and living for the benefit

and blessing of mankind. Is it not a state of existence which we should value, and individually seek? Let us not examine these subjects with a cold and speculative mind, but with ardent and enlivening faith: let us enter upon a life of discipline, "keeping under the body," and accustoming our natural desires to receive a denial, and to be put under restraint: we shall prove the truth of God's liberality, for never is a sacrifice made for Him that remains unacknowledged, or unrecompensed by Him,—He magnifies His grace by rewarding His own work in us, and when we obey His injunction we receive His witness. This we discover throughout the Scriptures, for it is His method of government. Abraham is a striking example, who, when he withheld not his son, immediately heard the consequent blessing, for "*this thing*"—"blessing I will bless thee," &c. &c. Shall not such considerations animate our faith? and will not the expectation of reaching to higher spiritual eminence, by every exercise of self-denial for the Lord's sake, be proved a quickening recollection to all our souls? let it be so, and let the words of Jesus be promptly obeyed, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself." It will be profitable to our souls shortly to review the whole of this subject, turning each head into a question of self-examination, and searching our own heart and life, as in the sight of God,

to ascertain whether we are Jesus' self-denying followers.

Are we indifferent to the riches and gains &c. of this world, so as to be delivered from the love of "filthy lucre?" Are our affections nailed to the cross, so that we can relinquish creaturely delights, and be content when forsaken by man? Are our tempers and spirit sanctified so that we are able to preserve inward serenity, and visible meekness, when suffering and injured by others? Do we profess the faith of God from *love* to God? are we incessant and persevering in prayer? can we rejoice in the gifts, labours, and prosperity of others? have we a heart of Christian sympathy? These inquiries may be readily answered if we will honestly listen to the evidence in our conversation, and thus we may be provided, with excitement to sorrow where we fail, and to gratitude where we trace the Spirit's operation. The investigation becomes doubly interesting by the confirmation which may be received from the Bible testimony.

Can we establish by scripture evidence, that the disposition of self-denial is opposed to that of selfishness?

"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth:" 1 Cor. x. 24. See also 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

Is it a disposition that seeks the glory of God?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's:" 1 Cor. vi. 20. See also 1 Cor. x. 31. 2 Cor. v. 13—15. Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

Can it exist with attention to self-interest?

"Sell that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth:" Luke xii. 33. See also Mark x. 29, 30. Matt. xvi. 26. 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Will it seek the benefit of men?

"Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." 1 Cor. viii. 13. See also 2 Cor. xii. 15. Phil. ii. 30. Col. i. 24. Phil. ii. 3, 4.

How is it proved from Scripture that self-denial runs through the conduct of a believer in worldly transactions, and situations of this life?

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Phil. iv. 11, 12. See also

1 Thess. ii. 5, 6. 1 Sam. xxiii. 16, 17. 2 Sam. xix. 30. Dan. v. 17. Gen. xiv. 22, 23. Ezek. xxiv. 15—18. Col. iii. 2, 3. 1 John v. 21. 1 Cor. iv. 3.

Prove that it equally prevails in concerns more immediately spiritual?

"And they straightway left their nets and followed him." Matt. iv. 20. See also Heb. xi. 24—26. Gal. i. 10. 1 Cor. i. 31. Job xiii. 15, Luke xviii. 7. Zech. iv. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 5—8. Acts xi. 18. Acts v. 41, 42. Phil. ii. 17—30. 2 Cor. xi. 28, 29.

Show that it is acceptable with God, and attended with blessings that lead to eminence before Him?

"Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptation: and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Luke xxii. 28. See also Gen. xxii. 15—18.

IDLENESS.

IDLENESS is a baneful and destructive evil, which is so prevalent among men, that it calls for a particular investigation, as to its nature and causes, and should be considered amongst those subjects that are of greatest moment to the Christian inquirer. It becomes more important, from the certainty, that there is no man free from its influence, in one form or other, and that it covers itself, in some instances, under a mask that is exceedingly imposing. It consists of a disinclination to put forth the energies of mind, body, or soul, to the discharge of duty. There are innumerable ways in which the evil exists, and is betrayed: we will endeavour to point out some of them; and our business, at this moment, should be, to give attention to the several examples adduced, and to endeavour to discover our own particular sin, or snare, in this respect.

By some persons, indolence is principally betrayed in their temporal concerns; for whether

placed in circumstances of authority, or dependance, man is frequently burdened, and encumbered, by the responsibilities that attend his station, and indolence renders the duty to which he is called intolerable and distasteful. We may look to those stations, wherein a man is raised to the condition of having public or relative duties of a high character; and frequently we shall discover the ruinous prevalence of indolence in the whole of his career. From the statesman down to the master of a family we may cast our eye, and examining the nature of those obligations which rest upon them, and the manner in which they are answered, we shall not fail to attach condemnation, in a greater or less degree, for some visible breach of that energy of spirit which ought to be displayed, in their undertakings and characters; and very frequently we shall discover also the most calamitous effects, flowing from no other *source*, but that of a disinclination to make those continual exertions, which a conscientious attention to duty requires. How often will they who have the charge of a family, and from whom servants and dependants are lawfully to expect protection, counsel, and comfort, be burdened with the very *thought* of their own responsibility. To them it appears intolerable to have to care, not only for body but for principle, and to be called upon to exercise guardianship over so many interests, and concerns of fellow creatures; and

rather than encounter the difficulty, they will close both their eyes and ears to the demand, and suffer every interest to be neglected. It is not that they are wholly insensible of their duty. but they cannot endure it: if any other person will undertake the charge, they are sensible of the advantage and kindness: but if it must be met by themselves, they prefer to run the risk of evil ensueing upon negligence; or, they will look upon and deplore existing evils, which they have not industry enough to remove, and acknowledge that it would be better were such things resolutely repressed, but remain in the fetters of an idleness of soul, that benumbs every faculty, and stupifies every power, both of body and mind. Thus disorder, transgressions, and sometimes ruin come upon the miserable habitation; and they, who might have enjoyed the blessings of domestic peace and comfort, are through the indolence of those, who should have governed them with integrity, reduced to misery, and exposed in many instances to infamy and shame.

If we turn our observation upon persons who are in business or trade, we continue the evidence of this ruinous disposition; for in how many instances are men found who utterly loathe the occupations which attend their lot in life, and who are heard to affirm that the cares of business are abhorrent to their soul, and this, upon examination, for no other reason than that

such cares call for diligence, and would force him out of those retreats, where his sluggishness may find its gratification. It is true he will sometimes give an attention to the demands of his shop, or of his warehouse, or of his farm, but he is only constrained to do so from fear of ruin and bankruptcy, should he totally neglect them; whilst the reluctancy with which he enters upon the duty gives full demonstration of his want of energy; and his readiness on all occasions to seize opportunities for escaping from such cares, and to pursue some less burdensome employ, sufficiently decide, that as a tradesman, or man of business, he is the prey of idleness. The consequence is that he lies open to the imposition of other men, he encourages defraud and injustice in those whom he employs, his affairs are in confusion, and frequently he is overtaken by a sudden blast upon his possessions, which he had just reason to anticipate, but which he had no resolution to avert, by suitable measures or personal exertion.

Let us now look to that vast proportion of the human race found in stations that are subordinate, servants, labourers, hirelings: here, how awfully does the sin of idleness triumph, and with bold and daring effrontery, seem to defy all shame or rebuke. With what scrupulous attention will the servant endeavour to weigh out, or apportion for himself, just that degree of

labour which he considers most suitable, without any regard to other considerations than such as spring out of love *of ease*. A greater proportion than this he complains of as unjust, and resents the demands that would put him upon using his powers with *energy*, as if some dreadful violence were done to him which he might justly resist; he contents himself, if he can *seem* to be busy all the day, little caring about the *manner* in which he discharges his duty, or the *quantity* of duty that he fulfils; and frequently, when not under the inspection of an overlooker, not at all careful to be even *apparently* engaged, but loitering, idle, negligent, dropping his tool, or folding his hands together, in total relaxation of the little effort he made whilst under observation. How frequently, in domestic service, will this indolence betray associates in such duties into the worst dispositions, and tempers,—no readiness to render mutual assistance, each one standing high upon what it is *their place* to do; and if on any occasion put upon a work, by a master or mistress, which they do not conceive exactly to belong to them, although perhaps forbearing to refuse compliance, sufficiently expressing by the countenance, manner, and low murmurings of anger, the unwillingness of the mind, and indolence of the spirit; and too often, immediately upon the restraint of a master's presence being removed,

breaking forth upon fellow-servants with passion, pride, and complaint; all denoting how reluctant the body is to work.

The same fatal disposition is betrayed, in many instances, under those circumstances of poverty to which men are exposed in this life. Where indolence prevails, it is more powerful than even the pressure of hunger, and the greatest extremity of want. Although it is well known, that if negligent in the labours of the day, the effects must be experienced in starvation, beggary, debt, and nakedness, these are not motives strong enough to overcome the native propensity, and the idle man wanders away from his work, mixes with companions, loose and unprincipled like himself, exhausts his moments and days in ranging the fields, or haunting an alehouse, or hanging in the corners of the streets, seeming to invite the approach of total ruin here and for ever. Women demonstrate the same wicked inattention to every domestic claim: the cottage is a scene of want, disorder, and filthiness: every neighbour's house is prefered to the abode where duty calls: the hours are all spent in idle, slanderous, and wicked converse, with persons of a similar disposition; and thus, with the home in wretchedness, with the husband in the public house, and with the wife in the sluttishness of utmost dirt and idleness, nothing can ensue but misery to all connected with them,

and the exhibition of ruined children and prevailing depravity.

But these scenes are not confined to the very poor: there are different degrees of the evil in various classes of life; many, who indolently break away from the obligations, which if discharged would sweeten home, and render domestic life a blessing; and numbers, who from want of proper exertion expose their partners in life to many losses, inconveniencies, debts, and temptations, all arising out of idleness, and a reluctancy to do that part which falls to the proportion of each in the management of worldly affairs.

There are duties also that lie beyond the immediate circle of domestic or personal interests, such as follow upon the bonds of society, and the tie which exists between fellow-creatures in the earth. Charities are continually required, either in the way of sympathy or of pecuniary relief: these are frequently acknowledged by persons who possess a natural sensibility of heart, and they will talk of the pity they feel for the sufferer, and shed tears over the distress that is related in their hearing: they will likewise wish that others would take up this cause of misery, and do something for the afflicted: but these expressions may very well accord with the very deeps of indolence, they cost nothing either to body or mind, no exertion is necessary, no

active and vigorous labour is put forth, and immediately it becomes evident, if a demand is made upon them for these, that their sensibilities are dried up before the power of natural idleness. They cannot take the trouble of visiting the sick, and making personal inquiries into their situations; they cannot encounter the labour of giving instruction to children, and endeavouring to open the dull and dark minds; they wish good luck and prosperity to those who are so engaged, but if it is required, that they must put forth more substantial evidences of good will, instantly they are ready with their objections, and say, "have me excused." Children may die in their ignorance, the destitute may perish, the sick groan without alleviation of their pains, if it is to be at the expense of individual exertions that they are to be relieved, for idleness domineers.

We may in the next place turn our inquiry upon the general practice of men, in respect of the cultivation of the mind. This we must admit to be a duty incumbent upon all men, according to their opportunities and stations. We know that in reference to *knowledge*, the human mind is a blank, until it receives impressions that are made either through example, or lessons instilled by an instructor. The little child in the first instance receives his knowledge through observation, and learns by imitation. When capable of further culture, parents are

sometimes willing to afford opportunities for further information, and the child is sent to school. Hereby, frequently, the parent gratifies his own indolence: he is glad to rid himself of the burden of giving instruction, and had rather pay his money than give his personal exertions. It is in some cases *preferable* that this responsibility should devolve upon another: the parent may not be qualified to give instruction, or he may be necessarily engaged in other business: but he ought never to feel himself discharged from the duty of seeing that his child *uses* the opportunities that are given, and of enforcing the observance of those lessons, or rules, that are required by the teacher. Parental authority is necessary here, and is frequently neglected, from no other cause, but to be spared the trouble of such attention. The same indolence is observable in young persons, who, during the time of education, consider it a season of grief and unwelcome restraint, looking forward with anxiety for the period of leaving school, that they may be at liberty from the tiresome round of tasks and lessons, imposed upon them as a grievous burden. No sooner does the anticipated time arrive than the yoke is broken with joy; and under the idea of being now sufficiently accomplished for the circle or calling in which he is to move, studies are laid aside, and the little, that has been so laboriously obtained, is gradually decreased by negligence,

and finally leaves the mind as empty as it was when education commenced. In some instances, there is a degree of ambition to *appear* accomplished, or to seem as clever and acute as those, who are to be future companions, and therefore some little regard may be paid to obtain, or to preserve, superficial knowledge—just so much as shall cover character, and make a man seem to be wise, and usually in this case some moments are given to *reading*. But what is the choice, or taste, of such persons? scraps of poetry, some new romance, some periodical publication, a newspaper, make up the library of such characters: these are skimmed over, that some general knowledge of the current topics of the day, or state of the times, may be obtained; or, in order to feast the imagination upon things unreal, which cost nothing, that it may escape from duties that cost something, putting the sinner in his imagination into a world that *is not*, and unfitting him for the world *that is*. In such a course there is nothing like cultivation of the mind, talents are left unimproved, or are perverted, and the intellect does not receive that vigorous assistance, by which it might be rendered strong for the discharge of obligations that would be profitable to men, and might tend to glorify the Lord.

The sin of indolence is not confined to subjects that relate only to this world: it is awfully true, and evident, that it extends to the

momentous concerns of the everlasting world, and that, in those interests, which justly require and call for every energy, there is a fearful prevalence of reluctancy, that bespeaks the sinner's deadness to his own salvation, that must end in his destruction, unless it is cured by God's grace. Upon this subject there are many persons thoroughly persuaded in their judgment: they consider it high time to set about the things of religion; and especially, if advancing in years, or debilitated in body, they think it is folly to procrastinate any longer. Nevertheless, they never begin this necessary work; the service of religion appears very desirable, when viewed at a distance, or considered in some hour of retirement, or felt enforced by arguments and under means of grace; but when the point is to be tried by an acceptance of the cross, or resolute denial of things that are inconsistent with God's service, the labor is too great, they have no energy to enter upon the round of duties and reformation that are requisite, and day after day passes away and finds them in the evening just as they were in the morning, thinking it would be better to live to God but never living to Him. But suppose the indolent man *has* made an effort, and enters into some of those ways which God's word requires: retaining his indolence, he will continue to live under its government, and hence he will constantly betray to himself and others

that he has not any vigor, or alacrity, in the spirit with which he enters his new pursuit. How is it that he reads his Bible? He opens the scriptures with langour of mind, his eyes fall on some passage which he is glad to read as a sign or token, if it speak favourably, hoping that God assures him hereby, and saves him the trouble of further investigation of his state. Or, perhaps, he reads a chapter because he has set himself so to do. Ask him when it is concluded, what are the chief points of doctrine, or precept, contained in what he has read? He has some difficulty to answer you, he scarcely knows what the Spirit has said in that portion, he was not *attending* to what he read, indolence covered his mind. How does he attend the public means? He brings his *body*, and perhaps also he yields an occasional attention of mind —some striking sentence forces itself into his ear, or something which he thinks very applicable to a neighbour, remains upon his recollection; or, perhaps some little passage, that seemed especially spoken *at him*, may have entered his heart; but if you ask him to tell you the chief and most interesting parts of the subject, he is unable, he cannot give you the thread of the discourse, not because his mind is not *strong* enough, but because it is not diligent enough, he has never stirred himself up to gather from that means what it was calculated to impart. How does he pray? In the morning with a

hurried address. Do you ask *wherefore?* it is answered, from his *indolence,* he has wasted the hour in sleep, that should have been given to God. He enters upon prayer with thoughts hanging on the business that awaits him, and which even then is calling for his presence, he passes through the service with irreverence, and without any realizing view of Jehovah. See him at night, weary, disinclined to pray, excusing himself from the duty or forcing himself to bend the knee, see him *asleep* on his knees and fallen into the arms of sloth, when he professed to be seeking the arms of the Saviour. Look to the indolent man in the subject of self-knowledge. Has he any just estimate of his own character? Alas! he is totally ignorant upon this theme: much he can descant upon the character of another, and frequently he will condemn in another the very sin for which himself is remarkable, but he never takes the trouble to look into the glass of God's word to discover his blemishes or defects, nor does he ever investigate the condition of the inward man in such a way as to come to *truth,*—his self-examinations are confined to sacrament seasons, or times of sickness, and these are times wherein the work is done only superficially—he knows nothing of his real character, it is too much trouble to exercise an hourly observation and vigilance over himself. Is it not manifest, that in such cases there is a

very fearful extent of the spirit of idleness? Where is the fervor, the wrestling, the hungering and thirsting, the self-discipline, that the importance of the subject demands? Alas! they exist not—indolence sits upon the throne, and the reins of government are held in its loose and enervated hand; consequently the profession is in disorder, and ruin prevails.

We are not to suppose that idleness never prevails in persons who are apparently *busy*. Busy persons are generally idle persons: this may seem at first sight a contradiction, yet it will be proved true. Idleness produces some inconveniences; a man may neglect his affairs so long that he is by necessity forced into a *fit* of diligence; thus, if he has suffered his books, his letters, and accounts to accumulate, to such a heap as to threaten to give him a trouble of enormous kind if longer neglected, he will put forth an effort, and resolve within himself, 'I will now encounter this difficulty, or it will be beyond my power—I will settle my books, answer all my letters, and put things into some little order.' So also, in other affairs, persons will address themselves with great exertion, to clear away what their idleness has heaped upon them. Servants will go on long, keeping up an outside appearance of cleanliness, whilst in their chambers, closets, &c. dirt is accumulating—poor persons will set apart a day in the week possibly as a *cleaning day*, not caring how

much dirt and misery they live in during the other six days,—these all *intend* to make one general effort suffice, for what should have been attended to minutely and constantly, and by throwing the whole family into confusion, and deranging the general order of the house, fancy they are very diligent, because they are very *busy;* whereas their business is consequent upon their idleness; and it is also discharged with the intention, and hope, that this great cleaning time will leave them at liberty to relax again, and enjoy another season of idleness.

There are others who seem to be diligent, if you confine your attention to the manner in which they pursue a *favorite* object; or, to the zeal with which they undertake some *new* thing. They also have fits of seeming industry: but even this shall prove them *indolent,* for they have no perseverance in the things, which it is evident they do prefer and desire. So long as novelty had a charm, they could prosecute their design, for they were furnished with a motive that for a season helped them to overcome their native indolence; but soon will this motive cease to exist, and indolence will make the employment tiresome, and lead to the relinquishment of the pursuit; or, where long maintained, yet if it is done with inattention to *other* duties, and with manifest indolence in the general character, we must certainly decide

that however diligently that one favorite object is pursued, it does not deliver the character from the charge of indolence.

The miserable effects of this sin are exceedingly increased, by the surprising infatuation which attends it. There is no idle person who is willing to confess himself so, to that extent which is due, even where his case is most palpable, and he is obliged to acknowledge some degree of offence in this respect: he is furnished with reasons and arguments, by which he satisfies himself, and fancies that he shall also persuade others into the same vindication of his character. Let us examine the list of reasons that he will assign in self-justification.

Some will excuse themselves from their responsibilities on the ground of health: they plead that however they may admit the excellency of the duty, or the need of giving it attention, they have not bodily powers to meet it: debility, liability to suffer from exertion, and various other reasons may be produced by them, as a vindication of their principle, although the positive duty is indeed undone. Or they have no *time*: leisure is possessed by many, and they can readily answer the claims that are proposed; but as for them, it is enough that they give a moderate degree of care to their own immediate homes, this fully occupies their moments, and leaves them none to spare. Besides all this, they argue that by their withhold-

talents that others possess: or, supposing I could make such attainments, of what profit would they be to me in my station, or with my prospects. Excuses are equally produced upon the great concerns of eternity, and these are frequently of a very awful character. Men will argue, what need of all this personal exertion; if I am elected I am sure to be saved without any trouble of mine, and if I am not elected, all the pains of the world could not save me; therefore it is my wisest plan not to encumber myself with all this care and toil, and expose myself to all this discipline and mortification, when, after all, I stand as good a chance as others for the kingdom of heaven, if it is to be mine at all. Or, it is argued, that already the soul is in the possession of as much religion as will bring it to heaven, and that there is no need of more, so that as to all the remonstrances that are made against a state of negligence, or against an indolent mode of professing religion, the idle man concludes that he can produce unanswerable arguments, and victoriously repel the troublers of his repose.

Ere we admit the force of his reasonings, however, it will be wise to examine them with attention. Let it be candidly answered, whether the excuse of *health* is so well founded, that it proves equally forcible when any favourite pleasure is in question? Suppose some delightful scheme or prospect is opened or pro-

posed, will the plea of ill health, or the fear of exposing the body, be sufficient to settle the mind in relinquishing the undertaking? On the contrary, will not excuses be framed, even where there is a positive state of weakness, to show why in this case an effort may be made, or the experiment be ventured. Unless the health is really in such a state as to prohibit the pursuit of what we call pleasure, it never can with justice be urged as a reason why duty may be neglected. Or, is it that want of *time* is the plea? First, let us take a survey of our days and nights, and ascertain whether the proportion due is indeed so fully devoted to the discharge of necessary engagements, as to leave none that is expended wastefully, carelessly, and unprofitably. How much time is given to useless visits; how much to sauntering walks, that rather fatigue than refresh; how much to the company of idlers, who waste their own hours and encroach upon their neighbours, by prolonged and allowed intrusions; how much especially is given to slumbers, wasted in sleep, and sacrificed to such a proportion of bed as enervates the body rather than invigorates. How many lay on their bed, hesitating and disputing whether or not it is time to rise, until overtaken again by the influence of drowsiness, and falling once more into the stupefaction of all their powers, at the time when they ought to have been up, and alert in the exercise of

those powers for God and man. How many are the minutes also that are lost, from the indolent manner in which work is performed, or from the want of decision as to what kind of work shall engage the present hour. And can we say on this review that men have no *time*? Or will it be an excuse that shall suffice to justify the soul in refusing works of duty and responsibility? If it is that want of fitness, either for business, or for acts of sympathy, and words of counsel, will be proposed as an excuse, —First, let us call to mind that prosperity does not always depend upon what *we* call fitness, the Lord can and will give a blessing to very feeble instruments, and in this way preserves the glory of success to His own name. And as to the fitness for our providential calling, this must certainly be ensured if we are diligent; for although we may thrust ourselves into situations for which we are not qualified, *God* never puts his creatures into a lot for which he will not render them capable; and if we fail, the condemnation rests upon ourselves. In affording assistance to others, or in working according to the rule of justice, it is evident that we are not excusable upon the grounds that indolence produces, for we are required to do unto others as we would they should do unto us; and when a man enters into service, it is expected that he should be faithful to the trust he undertakes to

rge; and such faithfulness includes an

attention to the duty devolving upon him, as if the property, &c. over which he has the charge were his own. Should it follow that others are rendered negligent by the diligence of one who is ready cheerfully to help, this might be remedied by representing the evil; or if not, we are never to measure the rule of our actions by the abuses that exist amongst wicked men. In poverty, so far from times of distress sinking the spirit, there is the greater call for a manful determination to labour, that at least the extremity of want may not be endured; and so far from losing friends by industry, it is generally the way of preserving them; for although an idle man may for a while impose upon those who lend him some present aid, he is soon detected in his idleness, his friends leave him in disgust, and he becomes notorious as a worthless character. If it is pleaded that mental powers are weak, then there is the greater reason to improve the little faculty that is possessed; but frequently this is asserted before trial has been made, and we have no right to act upon the presumption of such a fact, the experiment ought first to be made. The arguments produced to justify indolence in spiritual concerns are equally wicked and weak. No honest man can venture to say that there is solidity in such pleas. Who knows whether he is elect or not? Has God proclaimed the secret, and revealed amongst his counsels, who are the chosen ones,

and who are not? This is a secret never developed, until the Holy Spirit's witness blesses the regenerate soul with the spirit of adoption, and exhibits the new creature in Christ Jesus; it therefore never can be affirmed, that just reason for indolence is discoverable from such a source. The Lord has on the contrary commanded us to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, and has addressed his overtures in such general terms, that sinners of every description are encouraged to make an appeal, and are left inexcusable if they neglect this overture. They may throw the censure upon God's decrees, but the truth is, their own depraved and idle nature is the spring of all their disinclination and tardiness in these concerns. Thus upon examination it will be proved, and must be confessed by the ingenuous mind, that excuses such as these fall before the force of truth, and that the baseness of their origin leaves the pleader more guilty, in proportion to the subterfuges he uses to escape from what is true.

It is to be hoped, that as the result of this statement, we shall be prepared to enter with interest into the ensuing consideration of diligence. In the mean time, here let us pause, and reflect upon the particulars already presented. We must be convinced, in reference to other men, that this is a most destructive vice:

it not equally baneful in its application to our vn concerns? Let us not shrink from the iarge, but on the contrary constrain the mind an upright investigation of our own life and iaracter; and wherever we discover or suspect ny thing like one feature of this sin, mark it as ie subject of our future vigilance, and resolve y the strength of the Lord resolutely to seek ts destruction. Let us observe what ruin, and lisgrace, and discomfort, it brings upon every worldly and relative interest. Let us see into what discomposure, sin, and depression, it sinks the mind and heart. Let us weigh well the certain desolation which must ensue to the immortal soul, gathering up into the recollection those awful testimonies, which God has given against the unprofitable and the cumberers of the ground: and with our souls impressed deeply by the conviction of the necessity laid upon us to be diligent, if we would be happy, give our attention to the cure of indolence, in every form wherein it defiles or endangers us.

Particularly, let such as are possessed of the principles of heavenly life, be filled with awe at the extent of misery to which this one sin may conduct miserable man; and remember, that in a Christian profession it is exceedingly heinous and criminal. All approaches to such a distemper must therefore be guarded against, and in the pursuit of spiritual objects, or in the dis-

charge of relative obligations, a constant sense of the responsibility of a Christian must be preserved. The world should be constrained to acknowledge, that the disciple of Jesus adorns his Master's cause, by his singular excellency in all the duties of life: and our Lord Himself should rejoice over us, as the active, fervent, and laborious servants of the gospel, whose joy it is to work for their eternal Lord, and in whose service they find their perfect freedom.

Let us prove from Scripture that indolence indisposes a man for the duties of this life.

"By much slothfulness the building decayeth, and through idleness of the hand the house droppeth through." Eccl. x. 18.

"A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again." Prov. xix. 24.

"The slothful man saith, there is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." Prov. xxii. 13.

"And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not." 1 Tim. v. 13. See also Prov. xxi. 25.

Does it prevail in sinners towards the duties which relate to eternal life?

"Rise up ye women that are at ease, hear my voice ye careless daughters." Isa. xxxii. 9.

"But he, that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money." Matt. xxv. 18.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Matt. xxv. 5.

"By night on *my bed* I sought him whom my soul loveth. I sought him but I found him not." Can. iii. 1.

Prove that it conducts to ruin here and hereafter.

"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." Prov. xix. 15.

"He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." Prov. xviii. 9.

"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come like one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." Prov. xxiv. 33, 34.

"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xxv. 30.

"Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down why encumbereth it the ground." Luke xiii. 7.

Prove that God requires his people to triumph over all disposition to indolence.

"Whatever thy hand findeth to do, Do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device,

nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whether thou goest." Eccl. ix. 10.

"Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Rom. xii. 11.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Eph. v. 16.

"Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober." 1 Thess. v. 6.

"For when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat; for we hear there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread." 2 Thess. iii. 10—12.

"And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Heb. vi. 11, 12.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." Phil. ii. 13. See also 1 Cor. xv. 58.

DILIGENCE.

Diligence, being a term used to express the disposition that is opposed to indolence, must necessarily be descriptive of a readiness to put forth the energies of the mind, soul, or body, to the discharge of those duties which it is incumbent on man to perform. It will be demonstrated according to the views of a man, by some, in the concerns of this life, without any reference to the interests of eternity; by others, in the interests which comprehend both states of existence, combining industrious attention to the responsibilities of their station here, with persisting regard to the everlasting prospects which lay before the soul. In our investigation of this subject, we must embrace the whole, and endeavour to trace the diligent through all those situations wherein he fulfils this character; and in all of which we shall behold an exact contrast to the line of conduct pursued by the indolent.

In the first place, we have to look into the judgment which a diligent man exercises respecting his various callings; and we shall per-

ceive, that responsibility is no burden to him. He esteems it a privilege to have opportunities wherein he can be employed; and either from the impulse of natural activity, or from the force of just principle, he looks upon his duties with satisfaction; it is pleasurable to him to have occupation, and, if he is governed by amiable sentiments, he esteems the pleasure doubled, in proportion to the relative benefits which ensue from the discharge of these obligations. By this judgment, combined with an alacrity of will and desire, he is prepared for the daily claims which await him, and we trace him through the hours of the day ever in his post, and cheerfully filling up the measure of his appointed duty. Suppose him to be placed in a station to which the responsibility of authority is annexed, we shall see him gladly accepting the charge: it would be no satisfaction to him to provide him a substitute whom he might depute to discharge these duties; he loves to be personally at work where duty calls; and if by any circumstance, sickness, or providential hindrance, his regular attentions are unavoidably interrupted, it becomes a source of solicitude to his mind, and he thankfully returns to his accustomed course immediately upon the removal of the impediment. In consequence of this diligence of spirit, he gives to all the portion that is due: his children, dependants, servants, &c. have their just proportion of active endeavour for their comfort and pros-

perity; and with alertness of mind he gives himself to the scrupulous estimation of all his hours and minutes, in order that he may have no obstruction to the use of his authority and influence, by any negligence on his own part. If in trade, the same disposition will be the governing excitement, which prompts him to pay attention to all those avocations and interests that are connected with his station; and with a regular regard to order, and punctuality, he will not suffer a day to pass over without discharging its appointed obligations. His treaties, his engagements, his books, are all kept in their appointed time, place, and rule: and were he called into another world at a moment's notice, he would, in respect of his temporal concerns, have nothing wherewith to burden his own mind, or the minds of his survivors. If in the circumstances which belong to servitude, we shall find the diligent man equally conspicuous in all the various departments which he fills. Whether a domestic servant, or a hired labourer, or engaged in the manufactures of his country, whatever may be his employment, it is fulfilled with vigour: he finds his proportion of labour rendered pleasurable by the energy of a willing spirit, and he considers himself ever under the obligation to satisfy those to whom he has engaged his services. This is very manifest, where it exists, by the peculiar *manner* in which duty is performed. An industrious servant needs not

the perpetual, and wearisome, remonstrance of a master or mistress, to keep him up to his work: he quits his bed with prompt recollection of the duties that bid him rise, he goes forth to his employment with a countenance and deportment that proclaim his readiness of mind, he has no inclination to stand hesitating as to how much or how little he ought to do or he will do, before the reflection could suggest itself his hand is put forth to the deed, and without scruple he is willing to render to all around him all the assistance that is in his power. It is not needful for such a person to be under the eye of his employer, he works under the vigilant eye and stimulus of his own active principle, and will do the work with equal integrity although no man perceives him. If he is in poverty, this is no burden to the diligent; so long as he can honestly labour for his bread, he is not unwilling to work, and he rejoices if he has strength of body for this purpose. In every day of the week he is in his post, not idling half the week and toiling the rest, but equally performing the proportion that each season requires. His home is witness to his character, not only in the proportion of comfort that ensues from his diligence, but in the kindness and good will with which he is ready to lend an assistant hand, in those domestic scenes, where his attentions are rendered a blessing. And on the part of the female also, if there is diligence, there will be the same atten-

tion to individual responsibilities; and cleanliness, order, and comfort, will to the utmost of her power recommend her habitation, and prepare a suitable dwelling for those with whom she is allied. If relative duties, such as visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant, and befriending the needy, are proposed to the diligent, an immediate endeavour will be made to meet the demand: instead of pleading that there is no time, no health, no ability, the thoughts will be turned upon *how* the power of complying may be obtained, and every exertion will be used rather than decline an occasion in which mercy may be shown, and the necessitous be relieved. If called to the culture of the mind, diligence will accept the call. Suspicion may possibly arise, respecting the degree of mental capability that will be answerable to the culture, but experiment is made, and industry will attempt to adorn the intellect according to its proportion of strength. In this pursuit, the choice will turn upon such subjects as promise well in the issue: what it may cost of labour, to attain the acquirement, is not taken into the calculation; but if it appears in any degree a probability, or a possibility, that through personal efforts and diligence, such an advantage may be obtained, the ready spirit puts itself forth, and the toil is encountered, with a cheerful hope, that difficulties shall be surmounted, and the object be secured. This is the course of a diligent mind,

in reference to those engagements which are of a secular or temporal kind, or which relate to acquirements of human knowledge and science. And so far as they extend they are estimable. But this may be the incessant life of a man towards his present interests, and leave him as idle, and unprofitable, in the things of God, as if he were totally destitute of any active principle in his character. We see this constantly exemplified, and we need not express our surprize, when we consider the blindness of man to spiritual things, and the earthliness of his nature, which absorbs every faculty, until he is renewed by grace divine. But we will suppose a man, quickened by the spirit, to discover the need of salvation, and the excellency of the way of life. If he is diligent, he will act correspondently with this conviction: he will not, like the idle saunterer, continue in the way of death, exhausting his precious moments in vain *wishes* and *purposes*, but what he sees to be his duty he will attempt, and put forth his efforts with industry towards the escape of his soul from ruin, and the attainment of a sure hope. In consequence, he frequents the means of grace, he begins to read his long neglected Bible, he trys to pray, and he endeavours to keep a watch over himself—this he does *promptly*, and without allowing himself to tarry and hesitate and doubt. Having entered upon this new course, the same diligence attends him in the *manner* in

which its obligations are discharged. Observe him in hearing, how unlike to the indolent man, he gives his whole intense application to the truths that are unfolded, a deep interest is felt, and his attention is stirred up: if beset by wandering thoughts, he repels them with energy, and by the active use of his faculties, he labours to imbibe and treasure up the sacred lessons: through this disposition he is scarcely sensible of fatigue, or of time: whilst under the word his spirit is full of vigour, and he hears as for eternity: when he returns home the subject is recalled to his recollection, he diligently studies it again, digests it in his soul, and seeks the divine blessing upon the seed that has been sown. Observe him when he opens his Bible,—the uplifted eye and secret ejaculation bespeak his dependance and his appetite: he longs to find some portion of bread in the blessed volume, and implores that it may be a testimony opened to his mind and heart by the eternal Spirit: he reads with attention, strives to compare spiritual things with spiritual, meditates upon passages that seem difficult, and rests not without continual application to God, to enable him to understand. See him in prayer,—notwithstanding he has to contend with a nature that is always reluctant to be engaged in these exercises, he admits no excuse, he will not listen to the flesh. Even when oppressed by a body of death, and kneeling down in conscious dullness and cold-

ness of heart, his purpose is diligently to seek deliverance, and for this end he perseveringly obliges himself to the duty of prayer, and will not be withheld by any of the obstacles which sin and the world throw in his way. Many are the times wherein he wrestles, pleads, and weeps, and earnest are the breathings of his soul for those divine communications, in which he is resolved, by the help of God, to seek his lot. Look to the diligence which he displays in the *study of himself*. Not content with superficial views of his nature and actions, not satisfied with occasions for self-examination fixed at distant periods or confined to particular seasons, he is earnest in his discharge of this duty every hour of his life; he habitually watches the various movements of his heart, and keeps an ever-open eye upon the kingdom within: he considers himself responsible for the safety of the citadel, and appointed by the Lord to be the watchman upon the walls, and he industriously accepts the charge, obtaining the habit of detecting an enemy instantly upon his approach, and of calling every doubtful feeling immediately to the bar of a sanctified and upright Judgment. Nor does he confine his observations here,—he knows that there is no occurrence in life that may not prove a source of edification to his soul, and he reads the events around him as affording an open book full of lessons of wisdom, imparting counsel, warning, and excitement, and strengthening

him in the life of obedience and faith. Diligence is therefore to be considered as of vast importance, not only in the duties of the present world, but in the discharge of spiritual obligations; and without it, we may rest assured, that there can be no abundance in the heavenly life. A man may profess religion, and even have the root of the matter within him, but if he is under the power of indolence, his profession will wither and die, and his real principle will be languid and awfully depressed. It is therefore no unimportant question, as it respects our own individual character, and should be decidedly ascertained in all its extensive bearings.

We may now turn our inquiry upon this interesting subject into another channel: we must look to the *motives* by which diligence is put forth: hitherto we have chiefly confined our observation to what is external and visible; but this will not suffice: things external and visible may be enough for this life, and may please the possessor, and give him a name amongst men:—the life to come calls for something more, and never can be the inheritance of bliss, unless the soul has lived in the spiritual existence derived from union with Christ. We may obtain some satisfactory evidence upon this point, by examining how far the motives of a regenerate and unregenerate man may be similar; in what they differ; and how the true

believer rises through his motives into a higher standard both of action and experience.

Diligence may arise out of natural disposition. There are some persons to whom you could not propose a greater misery than a day of, what is called, total relaxation: they are much more fatigued by idleness than by labour, and become uneasy, restless, and exhausted by the suspension of their usual occupations: in such characters diligence is a kind of necessity of nature; for as certainly as they live, they must and will find employment. We are not to undervalue this disposition: compared with the idle, it rises in high estimation, and is usually attended with many relative advantages: it has in it, however, simply so considered, nothing of what may be called virtue; it is a constitutional property, and costs the possessor no exertion, and puts him upon no self-denial. Others will be diligent without any natural inclination to its energies, but from the powerful constraint of relative affections: they love their family, and in consequence cannot endure to see them exposed either to inconvenience, poverty, disgrace, or any of the train of evils that might ensue, were indolence allowed to prevail. From this impulse, they will put themselves to constant exertion, and night and day will be found in the paths of industry. This is to be considered a human virtue, and it rises above the former

state, in proportion to the self-denial that attends it; for it costs such a man much, and puts him upon perpetual self-discipline. There are others who have sufficient excitement to diligence, from considerations for their own credit: they have neither natural disposition nor relative affections to prompt, but they have great respect for themselves; they cannot endure the thought of being stigmatized as a burden to society, or as an idle vagabond, or as an unjust man; and, rather than expose themselves to such reproach, they will laboriously encounter difficulty, and give their shoulder to the wheel. This diligence arises out of pride; and although it *produces* that which is creditable to a man, it is corrupt in its spring, and has no excellency whatever in itself. Diligence may also be produced by selfishness and love of this world. A man may love gold and silver, or favour from those whom he seeks to please: if these may be obtained by industry, this pathway will be trod, and, whatever it may cost of exertion, the *end* compensates for the toil; and, actuated by these hopes, there will be the demonstration of exceeding diligence. But these are *mercenary* motives, and turn entirely upon earth, and from the prevalence of self-love are not acceptable to God, and, if detected by men, are considered despicable. But a man may be diligent from a desire to support his character, and to obtain favour, where the motive may not assume

the form of despicable feeling. It is suitable and admissible to seek to maintain station creditably, to meet every lawful demand, and to be able to pay every just debt. This diligence proceeds from a disposition naturally honest and just, and we distinguish it by the title of *honourable:* it is estimable as a natural principle. Benevolence will prompt some men to be diligent: were they to listen to their natural inclination, they would be excused from labour and beg to decline the work of administering to the needy: but the power of sympathy is the stronger influence; and although it is a subject of some pain and difficulty to them, rather than the necessitous should remain unbefriended, they will stand forth as helpers in the good work, and be industrious in the discharge of the duty they have undertaken. We may respect the kindness and good will of these dispositions, and they have their reward in the benefits which they impart; but they rise no higher, and are only the emotions of nature. Diligence may be called forth by principles of ambition, or by taste and mental refinement. There are many who, for the object of attaining some science, or to get the mastery of some abstruse point, or to gratify some prevailing passion of the mind, will deprive themselves of rest, of recreation, of society, devoting themselves to the pursuit, which they are resolved, if possible, to make successful by industry.

These may attain their object, dazzle their fellow-men by the splendour of their acquirements, and possibly benefit the world also by their discoveries; but the motive is vanity, or worldliness, or arrogancy, or pride, or self-seeking: it is not therefore to be numbered with hallowed or sanctified diligence.

Yet a regenerate man may possess some of these motives of action, and find himself strongly impelled to diligence by a measure of the same considerations. He may have a natural disposition to industry, he may have fervent love of his family and desire for their comforts, he may respect his own character, desire to display an honest principle, seek the approbation of his employers, gratify natural benevolence, cultivate taste, and listen to mental refinement:—but these are not the motives which actuate him, with their *selfish* and *corrupt* tendency, and they are not the *leading springs* of action:—a higher and more sacred principle operates in the true Christian breast, and sheds its sanctifying grace through these subordinate excitements, hallowing their character, regulating their course, and directing them to the great end which, as a believer, he keeps in view.

Do we inquire after these higher motives, and desire to ascertain their quality? Let us first look to that exercise of faith which teaches the regenerate to realize in all his duties *God's requirement*. This is the main spring of all his

conduct: whatever may be the nature of the obligation, this is the prompt recollection that decides his choice, and that fills him with activity; and it is his habit to animate his steps along his pilgrimage, by continually whispering as it were to his own ear, *God requires this!*— When such a recollection has its suitable force upon the heart, the necessary effect will be alacrity in the work, whatever it may be. The Christian has also an unfeigned zeal for the glory of God: he is aware that this is very much involved in his character in the world, and for this reason he becomes exceedingly solicitous that there may be nothing left undone which he ought to do: he carries about with him the sense of his own responsibility to justify the profession of religion by the diligent discharge of all relative duties; and he delights in hoping, that, so far as his influence or example extends, men may see the pure principle of the Christian faith, which works by love and has pleasure in obedience. Love for immortal souls will contribute another sacred motive, by which the Christian is constrained to diligence. This principle puts him upon seeking the edification of sinners, in every way in which it is possible for him to promote the blessed object: and he will continually be contriving methods, through which streams may be opened, that may water and revive the fainting souls of men. This motive will also prevail in his labours, both in

business and in mental application. He ardently desires to have it in his power to contribute of the "unrighteous mammon" to the great designs of gospel labourers; and he longs to be made meet to work for the Lord, and to be able to administer to the ignorant. If he may attain these objects by application, he finds one of the most precious motives to this diligence. He has also an experimental sense of the miserable propensity of his own heart to that which is evil: he finds the soil prolific of weeds, and he perceives that those plants of heavenly kind, which the Holy Spirit has given him, require constant training: his self-knowledge convinces him, that he must never relax in his industry, and that work is constantly supplied from the condition of his own soul in this world: he desires to keep a clean heart, he desires to keep vigorous graces in his soul: this is motive to diligence, and from the unfeigned solicitude of his mind to live consistently, and to evince his gratitude, he keeps his heart with all diligence, and gives himself to incessant exertion and care. A further precious motive arises out of his love of communion with the Lord, and his spiritual appetites for the means of grace. He delights in the hour of prayer, meditation, hearing, and communion with saints: he knows that these opportunities are exceedingly increased by *redeeming* time; and, for the purpose of obtaining these precious privileges, he

is bent upon retrenching from all occasions those moments that have been wasted in indolence or unprofitableness: it is sufficient for his soul to remember—by this exertion thou wilt obtain an hour with thy Saviour—by this resolve thou wilt be enabled to place thyself under the droppings of the rains and dews of the Spirit:—and through this motive he will ever be provided with considerations that will shake him from the infection of sluggishness, and put him upon vigour and determination in the duties of his way. One smile from the Saviour compensates for every exertion or act of self-denial; and the enjoyment of the Divine Presence is a sufficient consideration to put him upon that line of conduct which may give him holy leisure for seeking this blessing. Thus we discover some great peculiarities in *Christian* diligence, and a singular excellency, that far exceeds every possession of the natural man, and that is the only principle which gives intrinsic and lasting value to the life of industry. Let us seek a just estimation of this spiritual existence, and learn to exercise also a righteous discrimination between dispositions that are natural, and such as are supernatural: and since we profess to be engaged in the pursuit of *lasting* possessions, let us not allow the soul to be imposed upon by a counterfeit, or to fall into the destroying error of resting in human virtues, in place of cultivating divine graces.

It may not be unprofitable to suggest, on this occasion, some important methods, through which he, who is uprightly disposed to the cultivation of a spirit of industry, may be assisted in his pursuit: for we are to bear in mind, that although a natural disposition to diligence is advantageous, a natural *in*disposition is no excuse for the absence of the power, because the sin of indolence is capable of being resisted, and habits of industry may be induced; so also we should recollect, that God is ready to bestow his mercies, and that if we will seek help from Him we shall not fail.

Let a continual guard be kept upon the appetites of the flesh: indulgence of any animal gratification will tend to inactivity, if moderation and discipline are not maintained: there is nothing more injurious to a spirit of energy in duty, than intemperance, luxury, and carnality; and the man who would preserve his mind and body fit for active service, must remember, that he must inure himself to discipline, and live with a rein constantly held upon every inclination that would lead him to excess. In the next place, let there be a vigorous resistance of those influences which may arise from early habits of indolence, from bad education, from the maxims of the worldling, and from idle associates: these are very baneful to a man in all his pursuits, and in nothing more prejudicial, than in the pursuit of industry. Many

young persons have been allowed by their relatives and guardians to grow up in the most unprofitable course of life, making no conscience of duties, or hours, or obligations, and suffered to squander and waste the most precious period of their days in this world without one solid attainment: they thus become confirmed in the worst habits, and indisposed to make any exertion, except indeed it may be in the pursuit of some transitory and dying pleasure. Many persons are also exposed to danger by the maxims which are addressed to them, or uttered in their hearing, especially amongst the labouring class, where it is very common for men to be corrupters of each other, exciting their companions to resent demands upon them for diligence, representing it a hard case to be required to do so much, working upon the pride of the heart, and urging them to refuse and to resist the obligation, and so generating or fostering an idle disposition, and depressing the little purpose which perhaps was endeavouring to come forth to better resolutions. And what shall we say of the wretched course of too many, who, in all classes of life, are found ready to admit, or to be, the idler, that eats like a canker, and that brings infection, or carries disease wherever he turns. Is it not usual amongst the poor to suffer the idle neighbour to come into their habitation, to occupy the hour by unburdening his mind of the load of

news, scandal, and folly that he has picked up in his indolent range through the town, communicating nothing but stain and defilement, and many times inspiring the worst passions by repeating the slanders that he has heard of his host, as if he were doing him some great favour? Observe well the miserable effects that follow such communications—the visitor leaves you, and, closing your door, gives you the opportunity of reflecting upon what you have gained by his visit: look well to the issue, and it will be evident, that he has not only wasted your hour, but filled it with sin. Look to the higher circles: here the same evils are prevalent, although assuming a form more refined. How many are the sauntering idlers, that drop in to pass away their own burdensome moments, bringing and leaving nothing but evil! How many the long evenings spent in parties, where scarcely one profitable observation, worth treasuring up in the mind, is heard from any in the room! What waste of moments, of influence, of property! Alas! all expended in trespass against the law of diligence, and all leaving a certain conviction upon the mind, when the evening is past, that it has not been employed profitably as it might have been. These are evils against which they who are uprightly seeking diligence must resolutely watch; being determined to take from these idle engagements the abused hours, and to consecrate them to more rational and abiding

pursuits. It will be found advantageous also to put the mind upon serious calculation, as to what proportion of work *ought* to be done: we might otherwise fall into a temptation, and, by *overloading* our days, entangle our souls and do nothing well. Diligence does not call for a multiplicity of engagements, nor require a press of the mind and body beyond the power of action; and we should in this respect deal uprightly, as one who would judge fairly, and weigh with a just balance: but, having ascertained what ought to be done, it is then requisite that the mind should be put upon integrity to accomplish the rule, by no means allowing a procrastination of any duty beyond the time when it ought to be produced. We should never postpone till tomorrow, what it is in our power to accomplish today: tomorrow will have its own duties, sufficient for the day; and by deferring any work unnecessarily, we are accumulating business, and leaving a proportion for another time, which will only occasion greater difficulty. It is necessary also to strive after regularity and order, so as to render violent exertions needless, and always to endeavour, as much as possible, to be so punctual to the arrangement we have made, that one minute may not encroach upon another, and so throw us back in our occupations. In this respect we shall find how valuable a minute becomes, and the habit will be induced of improving those

little occasions, which may occur unexpectedly, or which may be afforded in walks, &c. for *anticipating* a work that lays before us, and so meeting it before its own hour arrives. These will be helps to the cure of indolence, and to the improvement of industry; and whoever will uprightly follow these rules, in the dependance of faith, will find prosperity attend him in this object. We may add to these the exciting recollection of the great advantages which attend the spirit of diligence, considering how many benefits flow from it to ourselves and others. It is a means of preserving inward peace: the Christian by such a course keeps his bosom in order, and maintains that regular intercourse with the Lord which strengthens him for his warfare, and which raises him above the despondencies that attend an uncertain state. God owns him in a present cheerfulness and serenity, that affords a gracious testimony to his soul, and by keeping, as it were, strait accounts with the Almighty, he is preserved in the habitual sense of the blood of sprinkling on his soul, and of the justifying righteousness in which he is arrayed. Such a life will also be followed by correspondent influence and usefulness, and will shed comfort around, so that innumerable advantages of a relative kind are the joyful result. And in reference to the approaching scene, when all earthly interests will be concluded, and the Christian warfare accom-

plished for ever, there will be such a proportion of blessedness following the gracious improvement of the talents God has bestowed, as will assuredly prove a blissful and cheering prospect, during the time of labour. These recollections should be cherished with power; they will, under God's blessing, help to spiritualize and invigorate all our resolves. We have also the great example of our dear Redeemer, whose steps we are called to follow, and in whom we see the unwearied exercise of all goodness. And following him, we see likewise a glorious cloud of witnesses, who have had divine strength perfected in their weakness, and by it have been made victorious in an arduous and laborious way. One more word of counsel may be given—Beware of discouragement, when failing in the resolutions that are made. It is very possible, that in some instances there will be lamentable short-comings, and that the spirit may in consequence be harassed and fearful: but we should use these discoveries to humble, not to depress our souls, and be stimulated thereby to be more abased, more dependant, and more *resolved*. Obstacles must only excite to a greater expression of integrity, and bring us to pray the more earnestly for that sufficiency which is treasured up for the believer in Jesus Christ, our living Head. Let us then put forth the energies of mind, soul, and body, to the discharge of those duties that are laid upon

us, and believe that the eternal Spirit is good, and powerful, and gracious, and will help us in time of need, and bless us in our upright endeavours to do the Lord's will.

Can we prove from scripture that diligence is enjoined in all the duties of life?

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds." Prov. xxvii. 23.

"He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence." Rom. xii. 8.

"I have showed you all things; how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts xx. 35.

Is diligence equally requisite in the interests which relate to eternal things?

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. iv. 23.

"And besides this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," &c. 2 Pet. i. 5—8.

"I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search." Psalm lxxvii. 6.

"Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Isa. lv. 2.

"And we desire that every one of you do

show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Heb. vi. 11.

"Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently." Psalm cxix. 4.

Give some examples of the motives that should induce the Christian to diligence in his duties to God and man.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Heb. xii. 14, 15.

"Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." 2 Pet. iii. 14.

"Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." Heb. iv. 11. See also Deut. iv. 9: vi. 6—8. 1 Tim. iv. 10.

What are the advantages to be derived through diligence?

"The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Prov. xiii. 4.

"The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness." Prov. xxi. 5.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." Prov. xxii. 29.

"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule." Prov. xii. 24.

"Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." 1 Cor. xv. 58.

"For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Heb. vi. 10.

"He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. vi. 6. See also Rev. xiv. 13. Matt. xxiv. 45—47.

INGRATITUDE.

INGRATITUDE is a vice that is by general consent stigmatised as most abominable, all men are agreed to declare it detestable, and bitterly to exclaim against those who are found guilty; and when any proportion of this offence is committed against the complainant, he usually feels, and utters, a sentiment which proves that he considers it unpardonable. In one point, however, there is a very awful development of human pride and ignorance: men are agreed in their readiness to affix this stigma upon the character of others, and to express their anathemas against the offender, but seldom admit that a charge is due against themselves, or that they have in any instance committed a breach upon this subject; and, in too many instances, sinners live unconvicted of their sin, notwithstanding their daily transgressions. If we will candidly, and seriously, yield our attention to the investigation upon which we are now entering, probably we shall be less disposed to plead innocence, and may discover,

that so great is our defilement by this evil, that, instead of self-complacency, we are called to exercise humiliation and repentance before God and man.

Ingratitude consists of a disposition to return good with evil, or to be insensible to kindnesses received: it is expressed either toward God or man.

In order to understand its true nature, and the various ways in which it is developed, we should, in the first place, consider the nature of those bonds which form relations in this life. God has been pleased to appoint certain ties, which connect us with one another in human affairs and interests, rendering us mutually dependant, and so promoting the happiness, and cementing the bonds of society. He has also taken his creature into certain relations to Himself, whereby to place man under a divine and salutary government, and invest him with privileges and blessings. To these ties there are certain annexed duties;—on the part of the superior, benefits are to be bestowed: on the part of the subordinate, gratitude is to be expressed: a negligence in these obligations implies sin, and if on the part of the obliged, is styled *ingratitude.*

Let us take up some of the relations that subsist, and consider what is the annexed duty in each, examining ourselves as we advance.

First, consider the relation between the pa-

rent and the child. On the parent's part it is due that a tender solicitude should be shown towards the interests of the child: this solicitude, if of genuine kind, must embrace the welfare of the body, mind, and soul: he will industriously and willingly consult for the food, the raiment, the health, and the comfort of the body: he will labor to obtain the advantages of education, desiring that intellectual powers may be cultivated and improved: he will earnestly desire to see the blessing of God resting upon that never dying part, which he knows must be interested in *salvation* if ever it is preserved: consequently he will bring before the child the great concerns of eternity, and address prayer to the mercy-seat, and counsel to the ear of his offspring, hoping to see some fruit of his anxious care.

Of course we have a right to expect that some return should be felt, which corresponds with all this tender solicitude. What shall we say, when the only return is that of evil, or of proud insensibility to the claim? when the child, instead of seeking to demonstrate some answering affection, forgets all these unwearied marks of kindness, becomes weary of the parent's authority or presence, loaths his restraints and counsel, chooses to adopt measures for self-gratification, wastes the advantages so expensively or carefully provided, grows up in stubbornness and rebellion, regardless of break-

ing a parent's heart, and sometimes totally indifferent even if that parent is in circumstances of hunger and want, so long as his own individual ease is enjoyed? Here we read the basest ingratitude, and look upon characters that may be ranked with Ham, with Hophni and Phinehas, with Absalom, and others on record in the scriptures, whose names and memory are considered infamous, and who died under the curse of the Almighty.

There is a relation subsisting between a master or mistress, and the domestics who serve in the household. On the part of the superior, it is required that, so long as the contract remains, the part of parental care and authority should be discharged: they are committed to the protection of those whom they serve, who should consult for their health, provision, comfort—should give them opportunities for the exercise and improvement of their mind, and should especially care for, and counsel them in things spiritual and eternal. When these duties are conscientiously discharged, the servant is laid under an obligation to *return* by gratitude the debt that he owes.

Is it a suitable return when servants are found wasting the property, abusing the confidence, vilifying the character, and idling and wasting the time which ought to be esteemed of equal value as if it were his own? Is he not ungrateful for the merciful providence, which

has allotted to him a service so easy, or so advantageous? and is he not basely returning evil for good to those who are perpetually consulting for his interest? We may be persuaded that this is a species of ingratitude, which, although exceedingly common in the world, will not on that account be countenanced by the Almighty; and they who are guilty herein, will be judged for a trespass against the laws of justice and of genuine feeling.

There is a relation between the government and the subjects of a realm: rulers and magistrates are appointed as parents or guardians of a nation, and are required to discharge their duty by consulting for the establishment of justice, and the happiness of men. Great is the privilege of any people living in a land where peace reigns, where toleration gives to every man a liberty of conscience before God, where a man can call his house his castle, and possess the blessing of domestic independence, where laws lay open for the succor of the oppressed, and where there is none to make afraid, save when crime calls for judgment, and the sword is the executioner of the sentence that sin has procured. Great as these privileges are however, men are very insensible of the blessing: instead of rejoicing in the comparison with other nations, instead of endeavouring to demonstrate some grateful sense of these providential mercies, too often the spirit of revolt, rebellion,

and confusion prevails: every inconvenience is a subject of complaint against government, and every thing which interferes with the advancement of some private scheme, or partial gratification, is considered an intolerable burden, and we hear on every side complaint of taxes, of impositions, of hardships, and even a foreign yoke is by some supposed to be preferable to the grievances which they suffer at home. Alas! this is an ingratitude of a daring kind, and provoketh the Lord: it manifests how little we have learnt to estimate the comforts of dwelling in a land of liberty, and how little we are thankful for exemption from the horrors of tyranny, and the dismal attendants upon the inquisition and the stake.

We ought to rank amongst the most important relations that subsist in this world, that between a minister and the people of his fold. It is his part to seek their spiritual riches, and to labor for them with industry and simplicity: this he does if he fulfill his charge: and they who are under his pastoral care, experience the sympathy, and ready aid, which he is prompt to extend, both to their temporal and eternal concerns. He prays, he studies, he visits, he labors, he is diligently engaged in establishing means, charitable institutions, and every help which may mitigate the evils of this life to his beloved people. And yet sometimes that very people return his anxious zeal with contempt,

with cavilling, with dissension, and with desertion; take offence at any thing which offends their pride, feel at liberty to throw off his authority whenever they please, murmur at the customary tribute appointed for his support, and in many instances whilst receiving from him constant and large contributions of his worldly substance for their benefit, or that of their children, will complain of the necessity of contributing their annual mite, and evade it, if it be in their power so to do. Is not this an ingratitude which the scriptures declare hateful, and to be condemned by God, the righteous Judge.

There are many benefactors in more private stations, by whom great kindnesses are continually shown to those amongst whom they live. Teachers in Sunday-schools, visitors of the sick, contributors to the needy and poor,—these in their different situations are all conferring benefits, yet few are receiving any correspondent return. It not unfrequently happens that the kindness is totally overlooked because more has been expected; and that the slightest provocation and cause of displeasure, arising in the corrupt passions of the breast, will induce the vilest returns of calumny or abuse. How often is this the case! especially in those instances where the education of children is concerned. How many parents, quite insensible to the exertions that have been

made for them, take them away from friends who have been laboring freely for years on their behalf; and not only do so without thanks, but with insolence. This is too common to be denied; and although a true laborer does not work for the perishing possession of human gratitude, and therefore will not desist from his labour of love on this account, it serves to demonstrate to us that ingratitude is not only a baneful, but a very common principle amongst men.

In that relation which subsists amongst us as *friends*, we have frequent opportunities for detecting this evil. It is true, on this ground, there is an equality of condition, each is equally the friend of the other, and friendship is maintained by a constant interchange of kindnesses; but this does not take away from the claim of gratitude; for much is received from one who is our friend, that ought to be deeply and abidingly estimated. What sympathy in our sorrows, what readiness to share every grief, or to rejoice in every joy! how many unwearied efforts to promote the interests of body or mind, how many hours probably have been spent in administering by the sick bed, how much fatigue, anxiety—perhaps reproach also, and persecution have all been endured for a friend! Should not these obligations be acknowledged, and a grateful return be expressed? But are there not innumerable

examples of the most surprising disregard of all these claims, and instances, wherein it appears that it is easy to find an oblivion for all that is past? Some very slight circumstance is not unfrequently the origin of a lasting separation, between those who have been apparently united by the strongest ties: a difference of opinion, an imagined neglect, can introduce schism and division, and not only cause a separation, but sometimes lead to the basest acts of treachery. The confidence, placed in the bosom when all was peace, is betrayed, and little regard is paid either to the happiness, or to the character of the now deserted friend. This is extreme ingratitude, and one of those demonstrations of a depraved, fickle, proud, and selfish nature, of which we may justly be utterly ashamed.

Ere we pass to the consideration of that ingratitude which is evinced towards God, we may here pause, and reflect upon the awful application of this part of the subject to ourselves. Under every one of these heads we may probably discover some degree of guilt belonging to our own character. Probably many who read these pages may now have advanced beyond the age of childhood, and perhaps at this moment the parent's head lays low in the grave, and the heart ceases to beat with anxiety for any earthly event: but this consideration does not release from the obligation

of examining how, when the relation did subsist, the duty was discharged. The Lord's eternal mind does not lose the remembrance of deeds, and fruits, produced by man. What has been perpetrated once is eternally present to his infinite mind; and if we have committed any of those base returns to the parent, which mark a spirit of ingratitude, we are still chargeable with the crime. There are many who are still in the situation of having parents, to whom they owe much: let such examine well the manner in which they deport themselves, and remember that God has universally proclaimed in the book of revelation, and has confirmed the requirement by his own example when in the flesh, that this sacred relation must be reverentially owned by the child.

Pass not from the investigation of this subject, without bringing before the bar of conscience all the different situations, in which gratitude ought to have flowed from the heart. Ask how servitude has been embraced and discharged? Ask with what affection national privileges are possessed? Inquire how the ministry of the gospel has been loved or otherwise? Let the recollection of favors, kindnesses, obligations conferred by benefactors, be strong in the mind; and let the tender ties of friendship be examined, and then ask if there has been no trait of ingratitude, either in a disposition to return

good with evil, or in an insensibility to the benefit bestowed?

A strict and impartial investigation will assuredly leave us no ground on which to flatter ourselves, and we shall find, that even as it respects relative life alone, we have evinced sufficient of this disposition, to prove that we are capable of still greater expressions of the evil, if tempted, or lost to the humility and vigilance of a Christian. The cure of the *guilt* is only to be found in the atoning blood of Christ: the cure of the *power* can only be obtained through the sanctifying grace of the Spirit. These gospel remedies we should earnestly seek: and we are inexcuseable if we remain in this bond of iniquity, seeing there is balm in Gilead, and a Physician there! We may remember for our furtherance in seeking this deliverance, that the origin of ingratitude is a *high esteem of our own desert.* We fancy that all is our *due,* and we are exasperated, or offended, when any thing is or seems to be withheld. Let us believe that *nothing* is our due, and we shall be prepared to receive a favor as altogether unmerited by us, and therefore justly exciting gratitude. And if receiving *no* favor, to be fully persuaded that we have no right to claim it at all, and consequently have no reason for resentment or complaint.

Let us now turn to the application of this subject, in the great relation subsisting between God and man: and in order to continue the testimony in one strain, look into this relation as unfolded to us in the several examples adduced of human ties. All that has been declared, of those relations which unite men together, may be comprehensively proclaimed of that blessed and eternal God, who is *all in one* —Father, Master, Ruler, Minister, Benefactor, Friend. These relations he has discharged in the glorious perfection which belongs to his own nature; nor will any man charge upon God that he has been defective in the obligation to which he condescended voluntarily and graciously to pledge himself. All that a Father's bounty, care, and goodness could provide, has been freely extended. Whatever is necessary for the support of the existence which he has given, is supplied in that providential government, which gives food and raiment and defence and counsel, and which not only watches over the mortal tabernacle with the guardianship of unwearied mercy, but has provided sustenance for the immortal soul, and opened a way wherein eternal life may be freely and surely obtained. All that can be conceived of a service wherein perfect freedom is proposed, with liberal consideration for every want, and full provision for the present and abiding advantage of such as serve, will be seen in the gospel record of that Saviour's

grace, who, when called Lord and Master proves himself such to his disciples, with every accompanying privilege belonging to the acceptance of his command. As a Ruler and King, he reigns in righteousness, and rules in peace. The souls of his children are received to the protection of his blessed government, and men are privileged to behold for themselves the happiness and joy of those who enter his kingdom as subjects of his grace. With patient compassion he continues to minister, himself becoming the great teacher and prophet of men, and with heavenly lessons pours upon the mind and ear testimonies full of everlasting life, and fraught with every expression of good will to men. As Benefactor, he is bountiful, liberal and free, imparting the fulness of covenant mercy to a redeemed people, and so exercising his rule and power as to give, to the evil and the good, the providential blessings of his sway. Over the vast creation he sheds the merciful influence of his mediatorial reign, and is ever bestowing gifts upon man. In the character of a Friend, he sympathizes with every want, listens to every distress, extends the unwearied vigilance of love, receives into his bosom every communication which the soul may be disposed to make, does so for the purpose of giving redress from grievances, or of supporting under sufferings and griefs; and whether in trouble or joy, in sickness or health, in danger or in

safety, continually proves that he is not untrue to his title of *sinner's friend.* In vain do we attempt to realize the extent of these mercies, from Him, in whose kindness we live every moment: let it suffice to say he is faithful—and that no title expressive of relative love, mercy, or fellowship, can sufficiently describe what God has made himself to man. And what does man return? where are the tributes that the grateful soul should bring? where the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, that these bounties demand? Let us answer the inquiry by turning our eyes upon the dispositions, and practice, which are exhibited by sinners. Well might Jehovah make the appeal, "If I be a Father where is mine honour: and if I be a Master where is my fear." Neither honor nor fear are produced in the ungrateful heart of man: he lives upon gifts that he abuses, and perverts to the dishonour of the giver, and listens to laws upon which he tramples with contempt of the Lawgiver. In vain we look for childlike reverence, in vain inquire for filial trust,—miserable man loaths the Father's presence, resents his interference, grows stubborn and perverse, becomes insolent, independent, and is in short, *ungrateful.* The service proposed has no attraction; or if entered into by profession, is only a cloke to covetousness and self-seeking. There is no desire to evince gratitude, by value for the Lord's inheritance—

by study to glorify his name—or by the suitable return of diligent consecration of time to his service. Privileges are wickedly abused: the rule of his kingdom is a law that is irksome to the soul; notwithstanding its benefits the sinner revolts, rebels, commits treason, and enters into conspiracy with Satan, against the dominion of the Lord. He enlists under the banner of the foe, and takes up arms against the Prince, by whose goodness and power he has hitherto been fed and upheld, preferring a foreign yoke! In vain are benefactions bestowed;—the blessing of the ministration of the word, the times of succour that have been extended, the willing sympathies that have been repeatedly and with unwearied goodness vouchsafed, are all inefficient:—his heart remains the cold region of death, or, the symptoms of life are but the transitory expressions of an excitement, that owes its whole power to some selfish passion of the heart, and that immediately expires when that passion ceases to have weight. Every age, and every individual example, of sinners descended from fallen Adam, will proclaim these truths; and we see legibly inscribed upon the character of every man, *Ingratitude.*

But will it be observed—True, all this is a just representation of the condition of a natural, or unregenerate man; but where the power of grace prevails, this evil is eradicated, and man becomes grateful? We may concede that

this is the case, yet we must not admit the fact in an unqualified sense. The grace of regeneration will necessarily introduce the soul into the blessed experience of a return of love to the Lord, and will also awaken a grateful sense of kindnesses received from men; but there is still the latent evil in the heart; and in a greater or less degree even the children of God are guilty upon this subject. In reference to their fellow-creatures they too often disgrace their profession, by an insensibility to the mercies which they receive, and are not sufficiently aware of the necessity of feeling, and owning, in all human relations, that, as Christians, they are bound in an especial manner to evince a lively, and a humble sense of those obligations which are laid upon them. Alas! pride sometimes corrupts them in this respect, and the haughtiness of high expectations will not unfrequently betray them into tempers, feelings, and acts, that are grievous and dishonourable to the saints. In reference to the blessed relation into which the grace of the covenant has brought them, there are sad testimonies of the subtle influence of ingratitude, and we ought to constrain the mind to examine them, so that we may be on our guard against all such encroachments. Is it never the case, that regenerate persons seem to lose the warm and lively sense of God's converting power? do they never fall into a spirit of forgetfulness, and seem as if the period

of their spiritual deliverance was now so distant, that they had almost forgotten the matchless wonder that it then appeared? Have there never been occasions wherein the perverseness of nature has been betrayed in resisting the divine counsels, or in complaining of the divine government? How came it to pass, that when Christ had in mercy thrown down the idol in our hearts, we were induced to set it up again? Have we never done this in any instance, nor turned again to those objects of inordinate affection, from which he divorced us by his grace? What renders us at any time reluctant to surrender what he may claim? Why that starting back, why that hesitation? Have we never grieved him by doubts, and been distrustful of his power or his love? Why do we sometimes postpone our interviews with him, even when invited by the pressing voice of the Spirit? Has he never seemed to say, "I wait to commune with thee,"—and have we never excused ourselves from the interview, and been ready to listen to any trifling hindrance, or any obtrusive rival? And did we never prove cowardly in the cause of our Friend, or start from the peril attendant upon confessing His Name? Alas! few are without fault in these things, and wherever the charge is substantiated, *ingratitude* is proved. Were we living in such affections to our Lord as accord with his to us, these things would not occur; our gratitude

would glow in the soul, and run through the life, and we should be found ardently ready to meet any claim, any requirement: we should be thankful to make any sacrifice for his honor, we should delight in fellowship with our best Friend, and should be ready to confess him before all men. Surely this is the *suitable* effect of those unspeakable privileges, which are ours as believers; and when they are not produced it becomes manifest that we are capable still of returning evil for good, and of being insensible to benefits received.

Let us be sensible of the extent and greatness of this sin; let us not shrink from the charge: it is requisite that we humble ourselves before God, and equally so that we endeavour to correct the sin. That Jehovah considers it abominable is evident, for He calls upon all creation to give ear whilst he proclaims the monstrous fact, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Shall we not agree in the divine judgment, and own it accursed and evil, and consequently seek its destruction, praying for the Spirit's power to quicken us increasingly in the sense of God's love to our souls?

We should also use the discoveries we make of our own ingratitude, to correct our strong exeitements, when we experience ingratitude from others. Let us watch over our temper

on such occasions, and promptly call to mind our own sin, and how patiently we have, notwithstanding, been borne with by the Lord; and never allow the enemy so to prevail against us, as that because iniquity shall abound, our love should wax cold. We must labour to prove that we are partakers of the Divine Nature, and that in this instance we can overcome evil with good, and show to all around that we tread in the steps of our dear Redeemer, who notwithstanding man's ingratitude continues to bless.

Let us prove that there is in man an awful disposition to return good with evil, or to be insensible of kindnesses received. And that it is manifested in the relations of this life.

"My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away." Job vi. 15.

"Yea mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Psalm xli. 9.

"I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife." Job xix. 16, 17. See also 1 Sam. viii. 5—7. 2 Sam. xv. 3. Gen. ix. 22. xl. 23.

Prove that it exists in reference to man's obligations to God.

"If I then be a Father, where is mine honour? And if I be a Master where is my fear, saith the Lord of Hosts?" Mal. i. 6.

"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Jer. ii. 13. See also Deut. xxxii. 5, 6. Psalm lxxviii. 9—11. John vi. 60, 66. Matt. xxv. 25. Isa. li. 13. Psalm cvi. 21. Isa. xliii. 21—23.

Show that even a regenerate man may fall into this sin.

"And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not." Luke xxii. 57. See also 2 Sam. xii. 7—9.

Prove that it is hateful to God, and ruinous to man.

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation!" Isa. i. 2, 3.

"Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house." Prov. xvii. 13.

GRATITUDE.

As ingratitude is a disposition to return evil for good, or to be insensible to kindnesses received, so, of course, gratitude consists of a readiness to feel and acknowledge kindness, with an unfeigned desire to make a correspondent return. It was necessarily implied in the last subject, that relative ties will be acknowledged, in proportion to the degree in which this disposition prevails, and that the grateful mind will appreciate the blessings which flow from the bonds of society, and the comforts of domestic affection. But we must not wholly omit a recapitulation of those duties which devolve upon such as are interested in these blessings; and we ought not to be indisposed to the investigation of our own spirit and deportment, by the rule of that revelation which so mercifully assists us in our inquiry.

Gratitude will awaken in the child an affectionate sense of the parent's solicitude and care. The many tender demonstrations that have

been given of unceasing anxiety for his comfort, health, and preservation, and the continued expression of unwearied interest and sympathy in all that belongs to his concerns, feelings, undertakings, &c. which still follows him in his course through life, will enter into his heart with powerful influence! The effect upon his conduct will be visible. He will return the parent's solicitude for him with an equal degree of attention to every wish, to every want, and to every comfort which comes before his observation: he will desire to anticipate the necessities of his parent, and, if in his power, to supply them; and he will endeavour perseveringly to bear upon his heart the recollection of that sacred obligation, which has been laid upon him both by the law of God and by the claims of the parent. If he possesses the spiritual discernment which belongs to the family of God, he will labour to afford spiritual consolations; and should his parent be destitute of this privilege, he will earnestly endeavour to commend the salvation of Jesus, by consistency of conduct, by humble and affectionate presentation of the truths of the Gospel to his ear, and by prayer for the impartation of that Holy Spirit whose office it is to quicken the dead soul.

Gratitude will equally prevail in the breast of the domestic, who is sensible of the advantages which have fallen to his lot. He will feel

and own that he is privileged, and he will demonstrate that this is more than a conviction of the mind. The interests of those who are daily consulting for his advantage, will become equally valuable as his own; and the property, the character, the comfort, of the master or mistress under whose authority he lives, will be cheerfully and conscientiously protected to the utmost of his ability.

The gratitude of a subject will be equally unquestionable, by the fruits which will necessarily spring from such a principle. He will, if sensible of the blessing of living in a land of liberty and toleration, and conscious of the many privileges which attend the establishment of just laws and civil order, feel and express his estimation of the mercy: he will discountenance the disaffected, and be ready to speak in behalf of his country, and to promote the blessings of peace: he will cheerfully contribute what is lawfully imposed upon him, for the support of the government under which he lives; and without fraud or discontent, he will render tribute unto whom tribute is due; this he will do with thanksgiving to God for those benefits which have thus been providentially ordained for him.

The member of a flock under the guidance and instruction of the faithful minister of the gospel, will have an abundant opportunity to evince the spirit of gratitude. If he is sensible

of the advantages that are extended to his soul through the ministry of the word, he will not only esteem it a privilege to administer in carnal things to the support of his minister, but he will desire to yield him a spring of joy in his labour, by the evidence of its efficacy in reducing the reign of nature, and establishing Christ's dominion in his heart. Hence he will strive to show forth the beauty of the Christian existence, not only delighting to glorify God, but feeling a sacred pleasure in affording spiritual satisfaction to his pastor. He will consequently live in peace, striving to preserve the bond of charity amongst those with whom he is associated, and giving himself, as opportunities may be opened, to be a fellow-worker in the cause of Christ, and to seek to win others to the Saviour's cross.

Benefactors, or near friends, will receive from the grateful heart every expression of the affection that would fain return some suitable demonstration of the effect their kindness or faithfulness has produced. Such a heart is sensible of every desire that is expressed to give pleasure, or to afford assistance or relief, and even where no immediate benefit may follow to the extent that has been hoped, the purpose is accepted with equal affection, as if it had accomplished the most entire deliverance. The manner, the spirit, and conduct, will speak what perhaps the tongue falters in uttering;

and every look will convey the language of that gratitude which lives in the soul. The consequence will be an unfeigned endeavour to give comfort, to relieve from anxiety, to prevent every sigh where it can be done, and to give ground for confidence in all the association that may exist. Or, should any unhappy circumstances arise, causing a division and separating between chief friends, this painful occurrence will not prevail against the grateful heart, so as to cause any forgetfulness of kindnesses that are past, or any breach of the confidence that has previously been placed in him by his friend; he mourns the circumstance which has made a breach—if it were in his power he would remove it: but, be this as it may, he never can forget what has been administered to him through that medium.

Thus, in relative life, gratitude is very extensive in its influence, and proves one of the most precious preservatives to every thing that is lovely and of good report. Were it more generally prevalent amongst men, society would have more of happiness than at present prevails: and were Christians more vigilant in attending to these obligations, the flock of Jesus would exhibit greater beauty than is usually seen in professors. It is of great importance that such duties be considered thoughtfully, and with self-investigation; and if we have zeal for God's glory, we shall remember that it is

only in this way we can show forth our Saviour's praise. Men who have not the Spirit, are incapable of judging Christians in their peculiarly spiritual privileges, and the Apostle declares, "We ourselves are judged of no man." But there are points of character wherein all men may exercise a sound judgment; and here the Christian lies open to the inspection of all by whom he is known. The world is capable of forming a proper estimate of those moral duties which all men should discharge towards each other; and it has a right to expect from Christ's disciples a singular attention to these obligations. How necessary therefore does it become, that such persons should cultivate every disposition that accords with the government of Jehovah, and that all men should be constrained to acknowledge, that, amidst other peculiarities possessed and boasted by Christians, this of high and peculiar morality, and strong grateful principle, is undeniable. In this way we may carry our holy zeal into the smallest actions or the common relations of life: and whilst the Lord is magnified by the fruit, our own souls may taste the unspeakable delight of a holy consciousness that we are living by faith in all things, and are blest by the rising influence of the indwelling God, who will perfect the soul of the redeemed in holiness and peace.

We now advance to the consideration of the principle of gratitude, which expresses itself towards God, having reference to those great interests which belong to the soul, or in which the Lord's bountiful acts in providence have been displayed. In the first place, we must look to the spring from whence this gratitude arises. It proceeds from a lively faith in God, as the overflowing source of all bounty and grace, combined with a full persuasion that all His ways are infinitely wise and good. In such instances, God has been pleased, by his anointing Spirit, to open the eyes to see, and the heart to feel, the excellency of Jehovah's divine government; and in consequence, spiritual gratitude is not partial in its actings; it is lively on all occasions and for *all* things, because in all things *God* is realized. Herein it entirely differs from that transient and superficial emotion which is sometimes felt by unregenerate men, who, upon experiencing any unlooked for benefit, or any wonderful deliverance, or any relative succour, will many times utter the most fervent praise to God. It is very common to hear men upon these occasions exclaiming, 'Thanks be to God;' or, 'God has wonderfully helped me;' or, 'If God had not interposed, I must certainly have sunk on that occasion in ruin.' And sometimes this excitement will lead to a temporary reformation of conduct, and strong resolves to be devoted to God's

service. Alas! this goodness is but as the morning dew, and as a summer's cloud, and no sooner is the recollection of the danger and deliverance gone, than the remembrance of the Deliverer is also effaced from the mind. The gratitude of a regenerate heart will be habitual, in the sense of personal unworthiness, of the many mercies bestowed! Such a man will many times, like David of old, enter into God's presence with the expression of admiring wonder at the loving mercies that are extended to him; his language is, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto; and this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come!" Under these reflections the fire is kindled, and he gratefully exclaims, "What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me." This disposition teaches him also to preserve the same gratitude, when dispensations assume a more gloomy aspect. Resting as he does in the divine perfections, he can be satisfied that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and therefore, even in the hour of bereavement and affliction, he retains his grateful submission, and the language of his heart is, "Shall I receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil!" "The Lord gave and the

Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!"

Thus the spring, or rise of the affection, lays deep in the renewed heart, and runs powerfully through the whole habitual course. But it is not satisfied with general habits of gratitude, such a heart delights to dwell upon and examine God's dealings, and will constantly engage itself upon the minutiæ of his government and grace to the soul. A very principal part of the Christian life is formed of *reflection*. God seizes with such power upon the inward man, that he is perpetually present to the thoughts, imaginations, and ideas. He becomes the centre to which all the exercises of the mind constantly tend, and thus we find experimentally, that not only in our more serious pursuits, but in every common avocation, the thoughts are engaged upon somewhat which refers to Him and His kingdom, either to what He is, or what He has been, or what He will be, or what we desire He may be, and in some form or other He is with us and in us, and we can testify in truth that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." That we are furnished with a rich variety for this purpose is fully known by such as are accustomed to meditate upon the works of the Lord. Even in such bountiful expressions of His goodness, as relate to this world's interests, there is an abundance of divine mercy, that may

justly amaze the believer. The Lord's glorious work of creation cannot fail to draw forth the tribute of praise. He considers himself as one of the monuments of divine power; and when he contemplates the nature of his existence, investing him with such wonderful capabilities of an immortal soul, and distinguishing him with such an exquisitely formed body, capable of so much enjoyment, of so much labour, or of so many interests, his Spirit rises to the Author of his being, and he exclaims with grateful wonder, "I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well." This tribute of gratitude is increased by the comparison which many make of God's bounty to them, contrasted with the condition of others of their fellow-creatures. There are those whose bodies are filled with disease, disabled and unfit for the discharge of the duties of life; or whose minds are the seat of madness, of folly, or of idiotic imbecility; why has it not been so with himself? The difference arose not from any power of his own, and can only be ascribed to the sovereign will of his Maker. For this, therefore, he feels that a claim is made upon him by his God; and whilst he commiserates the wretched condition of his fellow-creature, he is humbly grateful to the Lord who has made him to differ.

In addition to this claim, he looks upon his whole life as exhibiting one continued demand

upon his gratitude. Who can look back upon the steps he has trod, ever since he entered upon this world, without amazement at the Providence which has been his keeper and defence! Many were the mercies extended whilst yet the infant lay in the mother's breast, and hung dependantly upon the protection and care of the friend or nurse. The disposition to afford protection was implanted in the hearts of these succorers of infancy by the Lord Almighty; and the defence that preserved the existence that had been given proceeded from that providential goodness which is the source of all human safety. How has He persisted in providing food and raiment and home! how have the promises been fulfilled—bread has been sure, and water has not failed! Who amongst us possesses not the lively evidence of God's truth in the history of every day's experience! And although the degree of our outward supplies may have been made to differ, which of us, if addressed by Christ with, "when I sent you forth, lacked ye any thing?" would not be constrained to answer, "nothing!" Neither are these the only mercies that have filled our cup; in how many particular circumstances belonging to our individual history, have we proved the bounty and goodness of God! He hath rescued us from dangers and perils, He hath kept us from deaths and accidents; He hath lifted us up from the bed of sickness, He hath kept us from, or deli-

vered us out of, disgrace; He hath interposed when none could help but He; again and again, He hath heard our cry, yea, hath prevented us with his delivering power and presence, helping even before we cried! Nor are his mercies confined to ourselves alone—His blessings have descended around us, upon those whom we love, and He has dealt bountifully with us and ours. Such reflections open the spring, and gratitude bursts from the heart; we exclaim with deep and with fervent affection, "He redeemeth my life from destruction," "He daily loadeth me with his benefits;" and we learn how to use the thanksgiving, so often put into our mouths, with corresponding affections of the heart, "We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life."

If such are the excitements which follow the sense of providential mercies, what shall be the expression of gratitude that will arise when the mercies of redemption are added to the score? Surely here language must fail, and in vain does the believer attempt fully to testify what he feels for the unspeakable grace of salvation to his soul. Gratitude for this provision will gather food from every renewed contemplation of the grace, and by every advance that is made in self-knowledge. It must needs appear marvellous in the eyes of such a man, that God should have entertained thoughts so full of love and so resolved upon mercy; he looks upon

himself as a miserably fallen and ruined creature, unworthy the notice of the Almighty: he contemplates his own sins, perverseness, and defilement, with shame and abhorrence; how is it then that He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, should look on him with love! He is amazed that there could exist any design to recover, any willingness to help a creature such as he is. But when he also remembers that in order to effect the work, God himself must become incarnate, that He must draw near to his low estate, enter this world of sin, become a man of sorrows, take the burden of imputed guilt upon Himself, and deliver from the pit by Himself becoming a curse for his soul—his thoughts are lost in the unfathomable mystery of grace, and he gazes on the awful scenes that are opened to his faith with a heart overwhelmed within him. The purpose, the plan, the work of redemption in Christ, are themes too vast and marvellous for him fully to understand. Yet so much he knows, as raises the tribute of praise from his soul, and fills him with the devotion of a grateful heart. Many times also he looks to the way in which this provision has been made known to him, and how the Lord has sent his messengers, given the blessed word of testimony, and brought the tidings home to his ear, and not only to his ear, but lodged them in his heart, and by an effectual work, too mighty to be described or expressed, removed the hardness and

unbelief of his heart, and made him willing in the day of his power. All that attended the first discoveries that were made of Jesus to his mind is now a subject of increasing wonder and praise; and when he reflects upon the reluctancy he displayed, and the earthliness, pride, and vanity that opposed the entrance of salvation, and would have barred out the Saviour for ever, the gratitude of his soul takes a tenderer tone, and he is ready to mingle tears with his songs, and whilst he celebrates deliverance in the Spirit's power, to lay low in the dust, sensible that he has reasons for gratitude, which none can understand but himself.

But since the blessed period wherein the Lord prevailed over his native darkness, how innumerable have been the evidences of Fatherly care which God has extended towards him! The covenant dealings, which attend the discipline of the soul, are all subjects of grateful wonder. Much does the sinner require, ere he is brought to lay low at the foot of the cross; and many are the occasions wherein, even though a believer, he requires the furnace, and would be awfully defiled, but by the Lord's preventing grace. Experience developes to him the evil of his heart, and the patience of his God, and he perpetually reflects upon these subjects with a grateful soul to that tender compassion which fails not to guide, correct, and reprove him, as he needs.

Who is there possessed of any knowledge of the life of faith, that does not understand these things? Subdued and softened as the heart may be through the Spirit's operation, who does not know that there is a constant tendency to returning obduracy? that even in the midst of mercies and judgments, the affections seem capable of resuming their adamantine character, and of hardening under the icy coldness of this evil world? And who does not understand, that to Jesus a debt is due, who by the renewed application of his word, and work, is again and again breaking the rock in pieces, and who by the beams of his blessed countenance continues from time to time to soften and melt the affections, that they may still confess his sway?

Too often there is also an awful propensity to admit rivals into the heart, who dispute the sovereignty of Jesus the Lord, and whilst the Saviour is graciously calling the soul to devotion, sin and the flesh would divide the heart with Him. How perversely do we linger after our idols, how madly set them up again when he has cast them down, with what folly listen to the very enemies whose treachery we have long painfully proved!—Alas! thus giving evidence of a backsliding and creaturely nature. Were it any but the Lord with whom we have to do, how inevitably should we be cast off for our unfaithfulness! How marvellous then is that love

which never can be quenched, and that patience which incessantly works in us again and again, to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Is it not wonderful that He should so wisely consult for our spiritual increase, and so graciously arrange his providences, that we are as it were *forced* to take our flight, and quit our repose in earth? O how constantly do we need the dispensations which cry aloud in our ears, "This is not your rest, because it is polluted, it will destroy you"—and constantly are they sent! afflictions, bereavements, sicknesses and sorrows, all coming as messengers from a merciful Lord, whose jealousy is that of love and not of wrath, and who will not suffer his people to rest short of their privilege in Him.

Nor should we forget the kindness and mercy of our Saviour, displayed in the method which he adopts for bringing us into the knowledge of our own hearts. Here love and compassion triumph. It is necessary that we should know the inward malady: but were it revealed to us in all its extent, when first we enter upon the pilgrimage of faith, how utterly would the soul be overwhelmed, and how would the Spirit be ready to fall from the right way. He who remembers whereof we are made, and whose compassions never fail, undertakes therefore to develope the evil by degrees, and to make us acquainted with ourselves by a slow and gradual process, in which he at the same time imparts

effort may cost the sufferer some pain and conflict: nevertheless, it accords with the genuine sentiment of his breast; for although the burden of human misery is felt, there is a prospect which to his believing eye shines in splendid and enlivening promise before him. He knows that the afflictions of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in him, and comparing present evils with future joys, he is satisfied to look for that eternal weight of glory which is prepared for him, and in comparison of which his sorrows are light, and but for a moment. Thus he is able uprightly to smile, even with a heavy heart; and will gratefully confess, that if his afflictions abound, so do his consolations abound also.

One further proof of the existence of gratitude in the heart, may be found in the readiness with which the Lord will be acknowledged before men. This is one of those effects of the Spirit's work, which must follow the lively sense of obligation to Christ. Just as we observe the friend in natural life prompt to confess and own his friend before others, so will it be in the life that is spiritual, the grateful soul will not be ashamed to confess Jesus Christ and him crucified; but remembering to what shame and ignominy and pain he stooped, to confess him in his low estate, will be constrained to express a return of love, and a willingness to declare his obligation and to espouse His cause.

Let us be excited by these considerations to press after the attainment of this blessed grace of the Spirit: and if we are solicitous to obtain it for our own, remember that nothing will so much increase its energies as *spirituality* of mind. This state weans us from earth, raises us heavenwards, makes us satisfied that all God's dispensations are good, prepares us for contemplating His dealings with a just judgment, and consequently opens the way for the sense of debt, and the disposition to bless the divine government. We should keep from the world, and live in discipline of our flesh and spirit, and ever call upon our own souls to register the loving-kindnesses of our God in a faithful memory, and to call to remembrance the years of his right hand.

Let us prove from the Scriptures, that a sinner's heart can be made gratefully to feel the weight of obligation that God has laid upon him.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Psalm cxvi. 12.

Will this sense of obligation be expressed in gratitude towards human helpers, benefactors, or relations?

"Ruth clave unto her; and Ruth said, intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." Ruth i. 14. 16.

"And she said to her mistress, would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." 2 Kings v. 3.

"That they may offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and of his sons." Ezra vi. 10.

"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us, by the will of God." 2 Cor. viii. 5.

"And David said, is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" 2 Sam. ix. 1.

When gratitude is expressed towards God, does it *embrace* ALL his dealings, whether of pleasure or of pain?

"Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Job. ii. 10.

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Job i. 21.

Does this disposition arise out of satisfaction with the wisdom, and confidence in the power, of God?

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Rom. viii. 28.

Is the gratitude of a believer exercised for the blessing of creation?

"I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Psalm cxxxix. 14.

Is it felt in reference to God's providential mercies?

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Psalm ciii. 2. 4.

Is gratitude in lively exercise for the benefit of the covenant of salvation?

"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. ix. 15. See also Eph. i. 3; iii. 19—21.

Is the dispensation of the Ordinances of the Gospel a subject of gratitude?

"Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will." Eph. i. 8, 9.

Will the believer consider the application of salvation to his own soul a debt of gratitude?

"And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." 1 Tim. i. 14, 15.

Is the discipline used by the Lord to the soul a subject of gratitude with the believer?

"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are

right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Psalm xix. 75.

Is the believer gratefully sensible of the support which the Lord affords him in his pilgrimage?

"Now thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 2 Cor. ii. 14.

Will the believer's gratitude be expressed by the surrender of his life to the service and glory of God?

"Then said I, here am I, send me." Isa. vi. 8. Rom. xii. 1, 2. 2 Cor. v. 14.

Will it be the believer's desire gratefully to glorify God, by cheerful acquiescence in His dealings?

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Psalm cxix. 54. See also Psalm xxxiv. 22.

SHAME.

SHAME is a term that is used to express a certain state of feeling, produced by the consciousness of something that is considered disgraceful or derogatory to the character; or it may be excited under the dread of being *supposed* guilty of what is a dishonour to the name. It is powerful in its operation: it will frequently occasion violent palpitation in the heart, with strong agitation of the frame, and will redden the cheek with a blush of indignation, or of alarm, moving a man also to the most vehement expressions of innocence, or to the most determined manifestation of an apparent superiority to the subject of the accusation: he wishes it to be supposed, either that he is free from the charge, or that he is incapable of being an offender in this particular. We have examples in which this term is applied to subjects, where it is evident that disgrace, exposure, or infamy are intended. Thus, when Israel offended in the golden calf, it is said, "Aaron made them naked to their *shame;*" that is, disgraced them as

people stript of their peculiar privileges and honour as God's servants. So professors under the Gospel are exhorted to take heed to their profession, lest they should be exposed, and men should see their *shame*. When Saul dishonoured David, it is said that Jonathan was greatly displeased, because he "had done David *shame*." Ezra, when about to travel through the desert to the holy land, although sensible of the dangers to which he would be exposed, would not ask of the king an armed band: he was *ashamed* to make such a request; that is, he considered it unworthy his character and pretensions, as Jehovah's servant. Thus we find that whenever this term is used, it is intended to convey to us the idea of something *disgraceful*.

We cannot suppose the existence of this emotion in the breast of *innocent* man: capable of it of course he was, and might understand its nature, by the sensation of holy awe of sin that would attend his state of obedience; transgression would appear hateful and monstrous, and he might feel *ashamed*, as Ezra expressed himself, of a deed of rebellion, considering its ingratitude, defilement, &c. but he could not know the sense of disgrace, or the dread of being suspected, before that fearful moment in which he listened to the tempter, and plunged himself into circumstances of foulest degradation: then, it is expressly said, he was *ashamed*

—and from that period his nature became powerfully susceptible of this painful emotion. It is experienced on many occasions that refer only to this life, and is constantly exhibited in the transactions which take place amongst men: but, on the present occasion, we do not enter into this branch of the subject, but confine our inquiry to the various ways in which it is betrayed upon the subject of *religion*. It is a very awful fact, that in this sacred interest men are universally guilty of considering themselves *disgraced by close relation with God!* Do not let us start from such an assertion, as if it were an exaggerated representation of man's fallen nature: it will be found the truth; and, although surprising and alarming, will manifestly appear certain in the character of a miserable sinner. This we may endeavour to demonstrate, by turning our observation upon human life, and seeking to unravel and expose the springs of action by which men are governed.

Let us, in the first place, look to the *unenlightened*. What is there which such a man considers more distasteful than the service of Jehovah? He knows that there is a God—he feels that God's creature is responsible to his Maker; but he has no purpose to answer this obligation. His aversion is not the simple expression of distaste; it is attended with certain sensations which demonstrate that he

considers religious obedience *disgraceful* to him: he disdains the thought of admitting the sovereign right of an inspector of all his thoughts and actions: he is ready to say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" and, Who is Lord over me, my lips are my own? To be a subject, is, in his eyes, to be lowered and dishonoured. Nor is he at all desirous to *conceal* these sentiments: he is, on the contrary, solicitous that it should be known that he is free from what he considers such a disgraceful yoke. Speak to him of the character of a saint, immediately you discover his sentiments: he looks upon this as a term of reproach—he would be filled with horror at its being attached to his own name—he is anxious to make you believe that such is his judgment, and that he looks upon this title as signifying, in his mind, the same as hypocrite, fanatic, fool, or any other term of infamy. It will not be doubted by any of us, that this man would be utterly ashamed of a religious profession, and that he considers all that the scriptures reveal to be necessary to salvation, as so much dishonour to those who listen and obey the demands.

But there are persons of a different description, to whom we may in the next place direct our observation. Many men are *enlightened*—they have more powerful discoveries of the divine Name than is common amongst the worldlings; for they have obtained conviction

of God's greatness, they have been made to feel the divine testimony in their consciences, and are not quite at ease in a careless and sinful career. Sometimes also they have passing excitements of heart, bordering upon *wishes* to be better than they are, and from these sources a degree of anxiety is felt in the heart. To what do these impressions lead a man, who is still in the bondage of an earthly and carnal mind? Let us observe such an one, and his own conduct will give the reply. He is *ashamed* of the impressions that trouble him; under the influence of this feeling, he is alarmed lest his fellow-men should discover what is passing in his mind; conscious of his own disturbed spirit, he thinks that every one around him perceives it also; he looks and he listens with jealousy to all that is around him; and it becomes his chief solicitude to conceal, if possible, the little degree of remorse that he feels, and to hide from the sight of all men those budding wishes after better things, which he considers marks of *weakness*, and unworthy his character and name. Sometimes such persons will assume an extent of *impiety*, which they would not in other circumstances have displayed: they will talk loudly and boldly upon subjects of religion with words of disdain and contempt; they will do violence to their own feelings, and adopt manners and associates that would not have been chosen, were they not intent upon forming a cover,

through which they imagine the discernment of man will not penetrate; and however bitter may be the conflict when retiring from the society of the world, a degree of satisfaction is felt, if it is hoped that they hitherto escape the *calumny* of being supposed concerned for the salvation of the soul.

Amongst enlightened persons, there are others who will not go to this extreme of anxiety, and yet are equally under the dominion of shame; they are solicitous equally with the others to conceal their convictions, and, if it were possible, would do so, even from themselves: on some accounts, however, they are induced to associate occasionally with the despised saints, not *as saints*, but on the ground of some relative tie, or somewhat agreeable in the persons;—they like their meekness, they have pleasure in their conversation, they secretly admire their consistency, but whilst venturing thus far, they carefully wish it to be understood that "they are not of us;" and so powerful is this feeling, that many will openly express it, saying, "I like to accompany you sometimes to such and such people and places, but do not think I intend to be *one of your* society: they are afraid of being thought *infected* with zeal for God, or likely to *disgrace* themselves by renouncing the world. In such instances, men will be seen *occasionally* in the means of grace: they are not satisfied to be accounted like the heathen, or

that people should say of them that they are totally destitute of religion; but they will not advance into ways that would seem to go beyond the line which the world will approve. Some Sabbath duties are observed, the Lord's table is attended at the principal seasons, but never will they advance into what might excite a remark that such an one gives indication of seriousness, or is becoming a *saint*. In places where the Lord has provided His people with religious privileges, during the days of the week that intervene between the Sabbaths, this *shame* has constant opportunity to act. There are many who would like to come and hear; either they would wish for the information, or they would like to know what is going on, or they have a curiosity to hear different speakers; and were they to attend to this impulse, they would frequently be found in the assembly: but *shame* is stronger than thirst for knowledge, or than curiosity, and lest they should be disgraced in the world, they repress these feelings altogether. Yet not altogether with some persons, for there are ways in which it is hoped that the calumny may be escaped, and yet the curiosity, &c. be gratified. This is done by selecting some evening, or opportunity, to which the idea of *strictness* in those who attend is not so much attached; occasions that are more general or public, when all kinds of hearers may attend. Or it is sometimes done by choosing a suitable *season*, when

the shades of night will conceal him from those of his own neighbourhood or town, when he can slip in unperceived, or conceal himself in some retired corner; here he can gratify his wishes, and, when summer seasons return, he also can return to his wonted haunts, and none shall know that he committed this offence. And should it be known by companions, &c. and the scoff and laugh and taunt run high against him, presently he is ready with his excuse—he went to attend some friend, some stranger, some sister; or he went in the hope of seeing or meeting those who are agreeable to him, and who were present there. An *apology* is made for the deed, and sooner than be suspected of seriousness, or uprightness in the act, such a man will prefer, that you should suppose him actuated by the meanest and most despicable selfish motives, and that his attendance meant nothing at all in reference to *religion*. Shame triumphs in all these instances, and it is evident that these persons do consider it a *disgrace* to be closely allied to the Almighty.

The power of this evil is indeed fearful, since it prevails, in some degree, in instances where we have reason to hope that something more than illumination is possessed. Even amongst the regenerate this offence has been committed, and the children of God have by it been conducted into the most dangerous and sorrowful experience. It is not unfrequently the case,

that when a heart is under divine influence, it has to contend with this propensity in such a degree as keeps back from profession, and brings the soul into bondage for many months or years, which might have been spent in liberty and usefulness. How many are in this situation, who live in ungodly families, who are the children of parents opposed to spirituality, or who are surrounded by former acquaintance and friends, who have no estimation of God's service: they are ashamed of declaring the change in their own views, they are afraid of being exposed to their revilings or ridicule or opposition, and in consequence keep back the truth which would break from their lips, and bury the precious talent, that it may not be seen of men. They sigh and pray and read in secret, but they have no resolution to confess the Saviour openly; shame holds them in fetters, and so strong is the chain, that it refuses to yield to the remonstrances of years of misery, which must necessarily attend such a state of mind, and the poor soul lives in perpetual conflict and sorrow.

They who have more courage are not free from the snare. It is possible for a soul to be so powerfully embued with divine principle, as to profess openly the name and grace of Jesus, and yet to be impeded, in some instances, by this sinful shame. Perhaps in the society of the saints, or when not brought into immediate

contact with a worldly person, there may be very little consciousness of shame. It is easy to yield to the flow of inward, holy affection, when with those who have a kindred spirit; and the reproaches, &c. of the world, whilst unheard and unknown, do not excite any alarm; we can believe that they do exist, but they occasion no disturbance in the heart, if not reported or brought before us. The same person may feel very differently if his immediate circumstances are changed, and, although not deterred from his profession, may be *depressed*: he may wish in some companies to conceal the *extent* of his feelings; he thinks it more prudent to adopt a manner and language less scrupulous and strict; he puts himself as it were out of himself, and will converse with an affected ease upon worldly, and sometimes very unprofitable topics: if religion is introduced at all, it is done with *reserve*, and the chief attention is given to what might be considered polite or agreeable, and leave a favourable impression of *himself* upon the company. Thus in many cases the standard is lowered, compliances are made, the purity of the conscience is injured, and all because *shame* has had the rule: it has been considered, in this instance, *discreditable* to go to the extent that the gospel *requires;* and there has been a desire, that the world should not charge the character with excess, but that the credit of *moderation* should be secured.

There are some believers, who are miserably entangled by this disposition in those relative obligations, by which they are required to watch over and reprove their fellow-creatures. We are called, as Christians, to discharge this duty uprightly to all, and that the sinner and the saint should alike partake of this charity. Alas! how frequently is the commandment broken by reason of *shame*, which keeps us back from the duty that we feel and own to be right. The offence in our brother is seen and lamented; it ought to be pointed out and reproved; but the opportunity passes by again and again, and the offence is allowed and gathers strength daily. Ask what deters from the act, it will quickly be revealed that there is no hindrance in the way, but what arises out of this native sin: we dare not speak what we feel, we are afraid of acknowledging that we see with a spiritual discernment, and dread the being taxed with an over zeal and too much strictness of principle. This is very much the case amongst persons who are associated in life by near or domestic ties. Many are the occasions wherein holy conversation, prayer, mutual counsel, excellent rules for future conduct, and renewed vows of devotion, &c. might be proposed. There is the *inclination* to propose them, but the desire rises no farther than the inward wish, and ere it is expressed it dies on the lip. The reason is, the heart is depressed by the fear of man, and the poor soul is

robbed of the benefit, for it was *ashamed* to express the desire.

It will sometimes happen that this ungodly feeling prevails to very great temptation, in those pursuits which more immediately belong to our soul's salvation. Gracious appetites will constantly call for spiritual food: this is found in reading and prayer, and the true believer cannot live without these means: nevertheless, it may be, that he is so situated as not to have many opportunities for privacy, where he may pursue these objects without observation: the consequence is, that he frequently postpones the duty, and thinks he will do it some other time; or if he does it his mind is distracted with what the ungodly observer will be thinking of him. If long on his knees, he will be condemning him perhaps as a canting hypocrite; or if scrupulous in reading his Bible frequently, he will think of him with contempt or judge him unkindly. He is from these influences very often ashamed of fulfilling his best desires, and puts off his Lord and Saviour from an interview, until he can have it unseen of men. In most persons there is a strong indication, that this sinful shame is natural to a sinful heart, by one circumstance. It is this. Suppose, in the moment of prayer, the suppliant is *surprised* by the unexpected entrance of one who never prays: he has perhaps neglected to fasten his door, or he is overheard in the secret shade, where he is

pouring out his soul to God. What is the first emotion that arises? Examine it well; it is not merely the start of surprise, it is the beating of a heart that is *involuntarily ashamed;* and very frequently there is as much confusion on such occasions, as if the hand had been detected in theft, or a disclosure of the most heinous transgression had taken place. All this proves, that notwithstanding grace gives deliverance to the regenerate, the *temptation* is strong, and that there is a native disposition in all men to be ashamed of spiritual religion, considering it, in some way or other, *lowering* to the character, and dishonourable amongst men.

Ere we pass from these reflections, let us faithfully examine our own condition, and see how far we may belong to any of the characters that have been described. If amongst the first class, we are in a most miserable and hopeless state. So long as this mode of judgment remains, we must be in the way to endless ruin; for he that is thus estranged from the Almighty, can have no prospect before him but that of eternal banishment from His presence. Let the mind be turned upon the thought of that everlasting world to which we are hastening. That region is one wherein no hesitation can remain as to the rights and authority of Jehovah, and every creature must there prove in his own experience that subjection to Him will be enforced. Crimes

of every description will be punished, and none meet a more dreadful retribution than that of despising the glory of the Lord, and denying the excellency of His service. Let the exhortation be received whilst there is space for repentance: be merciful to the immortal soul that ere long must appear before its Judge, take into consideration its vast and endless necessities, seek victory over the powers of unbelief, and this fatal effect of a depraved and ignorant mind.

To such as discover their own features in the *enlightened coward* that has been described, the word of counsel ought to come with double power, because there is already an illumination of mind and conscience, to which it may be addressed. If such is the pain and solicitude that is endured under present excitements, what will be the full weight of conviction that must be the issue of contesting a matter with the Lord! Let not the delusion prevail which induces too many to go on in this resistance of the Spirit, under the idea that some future period will come when profession may be made with less disgrace, or without the risk of so many earthly losses and griefs. God may withdraw both light and opportunity, and if he continue them He will never lower His standard, nor change the road that leads to the kingdom. It is therefore absolutely necessary to enter *His* way, if life is found; and to bear the *shame* of the cross,

if ever the crown is received. Better is it to take it up with courage and openness, no peace can otherwise be experienced; and if death should come upon the mortal body whilst in such a state of mind, there remaineth no hope, for "the *fearful* shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire," and Christ will publicly disown the man that has been ashamed of Him.

Ere the servant of the Lord presumes to dismiss the inquiry that should arise in his soul, let him seriously investigate the whole of his connexions, circumstances, and avocations of life. We ought not to content ourselves with a general survey, and conclude that we are guiltless of shame because we openly profess the Christian discipleship. Our duty is to sift our own conduct, and to look narrowly into the feelings which arise within: this is the only method of attaining to self-knowledge, and therefore the great means towards humility and amendment. What is our spirit and conduct, when in the company of the ungodly, rich, and great of this world? Are we as scrupulous and as holy as we would appear amongst the humble followers of Jesus? How are we influenced when with rich relations, benefactors, patrons, masters? Is there nothing of shame, lest worldly advantages should be lost? And do they know the sentiments and views we hold, equally with such as are our fellow saints? What is the

line of conduct pursued, when with companions, fellow-servants, fellow-workmen, or friends? Do we openly testify against what is evil, and honestly pursue our own path of consecration to the Lord? Is there nothing in any of these situations, that in any degree intimates shame of the cross, shrinking from the standard, fear of man, dread of scoffs, or of the loss of affection, or of depression in business, or of persecution? If we bring these appeals home to our hearts, and apply them in the divine light of God's blessed countenance, we shall probably each find sufficient to humble us, showing our need of the blood of atonement; and in every instance wherein we discover the victory of love and faith, we shall see also the victory of *grace* and *mercy*, first obtained on the part of God over our evil hearts; and shall in consequence perceive how much we are debtors to the covenant in Christ. We may also deepen our own conviction upon this subject, by farther calling to our remembrance how many are the evils from which shame proceeds, and how many are the miseries to which it conducts; and thus we shall, in addition to our humiliation and gratitude, exercise the Spirit of supplication for the increased operation of the Holy Ghost, by whom it is that the shame of the cross is removed from our hearts, and we are strengthened to glory alone in Jesus crucified.

It is evident that this sin proceeds from the

foulest state of ignorance, combined with an awful extent of depravity of heart. God is neither known nor appreciated; and the sinner proves by this emotion, that his nature starts from the idea of fellowship or communion with Him. Surely this is a sufficient development of monstrous infatuation and guilt, and ought to be acknowledged a grievous demonstration of native enmity also. It gives evidence likewise of Satan's dominion over the whole man, and decidedly proves that he has prevailed to darken and stupify the miserable sinner's mind, leading him captive to final destruction. And it is manifest that he has encompassed the soul with lies, and delivered it over into bondage to the fear of man.

When prevailing against those who are under the blessed influence of gracious principles, it is found a grievous snare, producing bitter consequences to the soul, and being highly dishonourable to the Christian name. It is an awful grieving of the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to witness of Jesus, and to endear Him to the renewed heart. Through the divine operation Christ is exalted, and ought to be the object of constant affection and of unshaken honour. To act inconsistently with this testimony, and to conceal or depress the blessed impartation of divine life is a great offence; and in every instance where it is allowed, it is in measure doing despite to the Spirit of grace. It will always be attended

with a degree of entanglement likewise, with the world or worldly men; for it is impossible that such a disposition should prevail, without leading into forbidden compliances with sinners, either in manner, in word, or in deed: this brings a cloud upon our own profession, and renders it doubtful; and it endangers others, who seeing this conduct, are either emboldened in sin, or discouraged in seeking Christian eminence. It throws the soul into danger by inducing, in some instances, to deprive it of nourishment, and thus the hidden life is poor and languid, and fails of those energetic delights that quicken to present joy, and stimulate to seek higher attainments. And it moves the Lord to jealousy, so that visitations of displeasure are sent to testify of the divine anger,—many times in the inward depression of experience, sometimes in the loss of influence, frequently by public disgrace for inconsisteney which even the world will censure, and ofttimes in the want of assurance and comfort in prayer and private exercises. These are consequences of shame that will alarm the upright; and by considering how assuredly they follow wherever the sin is allowed, we may feel quickened, through the mercy of the Lord, to watch against it with increased resolution and simplicity of faith. We shall inquire into the grace of courage on another occasion: we have at present to search the ground of our heart for the

evil, and to bring it in contrition to Jesu's feet, that pardon and deliverance may be bestowed, and that henceforth we may shake off the infatuation, and walk in fellowship with the Lord.

Can we prove from God's word that unsanctified shame is the ruin of a sinner's soul?

"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." Mark viii. 38.

"If we deny Him, He will also deny us." 2 Tim. ii. 12.

Have we scripture evidence that it is a dreadful enemy to the children of God?

"Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not." John xviii. 17.

"But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak." Mark xiv. 71.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was much to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." Gal. ii. 11, 12.

which naturally courageous men put forth in works that have relative usefulness in view. The soldier, the mariner, the statesman, the friend, the guardian, the helper, are all valuable in proportion to the resolution with which they uphold their cause, and obtain blessings to the country, or deliverance to the individual. But we also know, that it does not necessarily follow, that a bold or courageous man uses his disposition in *beneficial* works: he may be influenced by depraved passions, and moved by ambition, envy, and malice: he may take up a cause that is accursed of God, and exercise his intrepidity in a daring resistance of laws and requirements that are divine, and his courage may prove the downfall of empire, the destruction of peace, and the damnation of his own soul. These reflections should teach us, therefore, in entering upon this subject, to exercise a spirit of discrimination, and to learn how to distinguish between natural qualities, and gracious gifts. We have many examples in human life of the truth of these observations; and some records in scripture, which confirm the statement. We find nations destitute of every true principle of faith, and devoid of *any gracious* operation, capable of evincing *the most* remarkable degree of natural courage. Great as were the apprehensions of the Philistine *host*, when about to contend with a people whom they believed to be under peculiar protection

from their God, the spirit rose to the danger; and with an ardor that proclaims the intrepidity with which they entered the field of battle, we hear them exhorting the armed bands to consistency, and resolve—"Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you; quit yourselves like men and fight." We find Absalom displaying a hardy spirit, when resolved upon revenge; and obtaining men as the instruments of his diabolical purpose, with a kindred disposition. His object was the blood of his brother Amnon: the murder would be attended with danger to himself and the hired assassins, but he was fearless of the peril, and urged upon the conspirators to be so also,—"Smite Amnon, then kill him, fear not, have not I commanded you, be courageous and be valiant." They were true to their charge, and the mortal blow was given. In subjects which assume another form, and present us the semblance of *religious* feeling, we may discover the same prevalence of *natural* courage. Jehu was a man of this description: he was intrepid, bold, resolved: he was a fit instrument for the work of judgment to which God appointed him: he was to destroy the worshippers of Baal, and meet the fury of the enraged and powerful Jezebel; he started not from the commission, but conscious of the inward possession which fired his breast with

ardor for the work, he could confidently express it saying, Come see my zeal for the *Lord*." To these we may add the example of Saul of Tarsus, who in the boldness of natural temper went forth as a lion to the prey, and directed his fearless passions to the destruction of the sheep of Christ's pasture, and in disdain of every peril to which he might expose his own person. Thus we perceive that the human heart is capable of beating high in the career of earthly greatness, or to the accomplishment of natural desires, and that there are many courageous men who will adventure every thing in the support of the cause they espouse.

Does it not become exceedingly interesting, to turn our inquiry into the nature of the *difference* observable in *Christian* courage? May we not be disposed to ask wherein it *can* differ, and to conclude that it is nothing more than natural courage directed to the object of Christian interest? This inquiry however will be speedily answered by our own observation, if we look into what transpires in religious concerns; for here we continually perceive, that so far from this being the case, it frequently happens, that the very men who would enter the field of battle, rush to the cannons mouth, brave the stormy deep, contend with wild beasts of prey, or meet the scorn, oppression, and cruelty of men in an *earthly* cause, are very

cowards, when the cause which demands their zeal is that of *religion*. They find it easier to encounter difficulty upon any subject, than upon the cross, and start, and tremble, and blush, and fear, when exposed to this reproach, as if they had no spring of resolution in their breast, and no power to meet the frown of man. It must appear a very affecting truth, because it so fully demonstrates the natural aversion of the heart to God. And whenever we see the awful spectacle of a man bold and naturally courageous in all his human interests, and shrinking as one disgraced and exposed when taxed with an interest in the Redeemer's name, we read a lesson that should not pass away unimproved, for it proclaims the despicable condition to which proud man is fallen, and exhibits a creature in reality devoid of all those noble and generous feelings of which he is ready to boast himself. But the point bearing upon our present subject is this, it proves that natural courage is not the same thing as Christian courage, and that although it may be serviceable as a *sanctified* instrument to the higher disposition of intrepidity for Christ, it will not serve a man in the smallest degree, whilst unsanctified, in those things which regard his salvation.

How then would we describe Christian courage? It is a gracious effect of the Holy Spirit's influence upon a regenerate man, either sanctifying his natural disposition, or imparting the disposition where naturally it has not ex-

isted. That the divine influence of the Holy Ghost is requisite, in order to give this holy tendency to natural courage, is demonstrated by scripture examples. Peter was a man whose ardent disposition would dispose him to intrepidity; and in many instances he gave evidence that such was his character; yet we find him remarkably liable to the alarms that were excited through the fear of man, and on two memorable occasions committing an awful trespass from this evil. Paul was a man of bold principle, yet he felt his entire dependance upon the supernatural grace of God, for the manifestation of this spirit in interests of the cross, and frequently expressed his earnest desire for the blessing, urging his fellow saints to pray for him that he might have *grace* to open his mouth *boldly*, to make known the *mystery of the gospel*. In other instances we discover the same truth, through the characters of such as were naturally timid, or whose sex might dispose them more naturally to the influence of fear, and dread of suffering. It appears from the scripture account of the evangelist Mark, that he was naturally fearful, and disinclined to the pathway of peril: he accompanied Paul and Barnabas in some of their travels, but was afterwards induced to leave them, and return home, evidently from motives which the apostle considered reprehensible, Acts xv. 28. His natural fears were, however, subdued by the Spirit's power, and in a future period he is declared to be *profitable* to

the ministry, and desired by the apostle as a companion in the work: 2 Tim. iv. 11. We read also of many females, amongst the number of that cloud of witnesses, presented as an example to the church, of whom it is declared that they "were tortured, *not accepting* deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Thus it becomes evident to us, that believers are dependant upon the Lord for all that energy which is required to a conistent profession of a crucified Redeemer, and that in this dependence the weakest shall be supplied with sufficient strength for the day of need, "waxing valiant in fight, and turning to flight the armies of the aliens."

We have now to inquire, how this disposition is produced in the sinner's heart? for the Spirit's operations are always consistent with His own blessed nature, and with the condition of man as a rational creature; and whenever he requires the exercise of a peculiar affection in the vessels of mercy, he not only works it in them, but establishes it upon reasonable principles. Sublime and supernatural as are the dispositions which belong to the new creature in Christ, infinitely *above* the reason of finite man, there is nothing in these *contrary* to this faculty; and it is establishing to faith, and profession, to discover, how fully every requirement of the gospel is built upon truths that reason ought most to approve. According to

this argument we find Christian courage *consequent* upon a *previous* work of grace in the heart, so that it is firm, lasting, and full of understanding and judgment. The first great motive is the full persuasion of the *excellency* of the religion of Jesus Christ. It is believed in its truth and in its glory. The mind is not only reconciled to the revelation of life in him, but accepts it as the only way, and as most honourable to Jehovah. In the redemption of the cross, all the glories of the eternal name appear in their splendor; and with an understanding anointed by the Holy Ghost, the hearty assent is given to the divine and efficacious plan of life in him. Attendant upon this is a further knowledge. It is fully understood that this salvation must be acknowledged, and confessed: the positive requirement of God that men should own the name of Jesus, and the assertion that so frequently abounds in the scripture, "that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," convinces such a man that it is *necessary* for him to *profess* the faith if he would be saved. Persuasion of the judgment, and an assent to divine requirement, is, however, not enough; these operations, if not attended with a further work of grace, will not produce the preparation of soul, which will lead to courage in the profession. The requisite that is essential to this state of mind, is a restless and affectionate solicitude to appropriate salvation—an appetite

that cannot be satisfied without the sense of interest in Christ. This impelling principle prompts to *such* satisfaction, and the result will be an open avowal of the inward conviction, and the casting of the soul upon the Lord as its portion.

By these preparatory operations the believer is brought out from the world, and fulfils the character of discipleship by a visible separation from sinners, and espousal of spiritual interests. The arguments that arise from a distempered mind, and wavering heart, are now repressed and silenced; and being fully persuaded that God in Christ is all in all, and the only object who may justly claim the expression of courageous zeal, all other claims are made subordinate, and all attendant dangers, shame and loss, are cheerfully encountered; he takes up the cross, counting it his glory; he esteems all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Saviour; and going forth without the camp, he gladly bears the reproach of the cross. The observations that will be made upon him by his former friends and associates, the injury that may be suffered in his worldly prospects and business, the desertion which may ensue of those who have hitherto loved and adhered to him, are not to be put in competition with the spiritual blessings that are before him in the Lord; and made willing and able to adventure all these things, he takes his public stand as a

Christian, and bears on his forehead the name of his God.

He is now ashamed of that former hesitation, and backwardness, which he felt to own the Lord in his blessed ordinances, and loathing himself for this horrible demonstration of a depraved nature, he enters upon the different course, which will distinguish him as amongst the spiritual and settled disciples of the Saviour. He turns his back upon the world, and with his face Zion-wards, enters the pastures where the sheep of the flock are feeding; and being earnestly desirous to maintain the *condition* of a saint, he considers it no dishonor to be reproached by the world with this title.

In these pastures he finds also the fellowship in which he most delights, he owns the followers of the Lamb, he loves them as his Redeemer's property, he communes with them as fellow-heirs of one blessed home, and whatever may be their outward condition in this life he estimates them in the privileges of faith, and openly and decisively proves before all men that he is not ashamed of a brotherhood thus spiritual and eternal.

Christian courage will powerfully constrain to other acts of zeal and fervor, by which the profession becomes still more observable and public. It is greatly required in those situations, wherein the believer is called upon to reprove for sin, or to remonstrate against incon-

sistencies in profession. Nature shrinks from taxing a man with offence, and will form a thousand excuses, by which to escape from the responsibility, or at least to *postpone* the discharge of the duty. But courage will rise above these obstacles, and with steady and zealous charity will speak the word of counsel. The example of John Baptist, who, speaking before kings, was called to the dangerous service of bringing home a charge against a powerful prince, is to be observed as an example for our courage also. "It is not lawful for thee to have her," was a pointed address that placed his own body in prison; but he was bold in the Spirit, and consulted only for the glory of God. A similar example is recorded in Daniel. The persecuted servants of God refused not the way of peril to which their faith exposed them: with a dignified intrepidity they met the furious prince—calmly, but resolutely declared their determination not to worship the image he had set up—and with holy courage fulfilled their calling, and glorified their God. This is the influence under which every believer will act, when he is possessed of Christian courage: he is privileged to say, "The Lord is my helper I will not fear what man can do unto me:" and with the Psalmist to resolve, "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed." Equally will he venture the remonstrance which is addressed to a brother.

However exalted he may be in the church of Christ, if he discovers any thing in his life and conversation that is not consistent with Christ's honor, he will testify of the truth; and although he will clothe his feelings in language expressive of his own unfeigned humility, he will express himself with courage, as one who is bound by his allegiance to the eternal Lord to plead his cause.

The great and peculiar blessings which the Lord has been pleased to impart to such as possess and demonstrate Christian courage, ought to be the subject of our serious and grateful reflection. He has not left his children without a correspondent inheritance on this side eternity; for he delights to acknowledge the bold confessor of His name with such blessings as are beyond all calculation, and exactly answerable to the affections of the redeemed. We have witnessed in others the blessedness that ensues, we have seen them exalted in privilege and raised to those spiritual enjoyments which are the foretaste of heaven, possibly we have experienced our own share of these divine mercies, and have found the way of a confessor that of blessedness and peace;—let us be assured, these are tokens of the Saviour's presence, affording the pledge of His approving love, and that so long as we are faithful in this course, we shall continue to prove the bountiful

acknowledgment of the Lord's smile. These are tokens of His love that He seems to reserve for believers of this description—sweet inward visits of the Spirit which cheer the hidden man, and revive the soul with unutterable joys. The secret of the Lord is with the faithful, and He will show them His covenant:"—how true is this promise, and how abundant its bliss. Under such manifestations Jehovah seems to stand before the wondering eye in a brilliancy of glory that exceedeth the utmost expectation of the soul, revealing His excellence, His grace, His love, and assuring the saint of eternal remembrance and endless life; whilst efficacious *influence* is also derived from the vision, and the bosom experiences a pure and holy increase of every best disposition, and of all the energies of the new creation. Nor is the secret enjoyment all: there will be a *manifest* advantage, for the very courage which is the acknowledged grace, in these instances is strengthened to greater acts of spiritual victory,—"The righteous are bold as a lion:" every renewed witness which the Comforter gives of the integrity of the soul, inspires it with renewed ardour: tokens of favour do but stimulate to earnest endeavour, still more to demonstrate adherence to the cause: and whilst the saint is passing onwards, from grace to grace, he is also striving incessantly, that he may exhibit victory after victory. The Lord, on His part, will answer

this visible increase of the believer's zeal; and although He may allow the enemy to make fearful advances upon the soul, or suffer many painful trials to come upon His child, will take occasion by these apparent evils to magnify His own truth. He will so interpose for His servant, as to render it conspicuous to all, that divine guardianship is over him: mercies, deliverances, and comfort, shall manifestly encompass and uphold him, and in the hour of extremity he shall find his Saviour near. This unshaken love of God is the possession in which the believer can repose with simplicity, and therefore, whilst he boldly meets adversity, he is *serene* also in the confidence that God is his keeper.

It should be a subject of joy also, that God generally confesses the man who courageously confesses Him, by a great proportion of relative usefulness. Men may, and will, oppose and vilify the saint; yet there is an irresist*ible* power in the consistent boldness of faith, that will bear down even prejudice itself. Frequently the very persecutor is secretly filled with amazement and conviction, when he beholds the meek but intrepid spirit of the sufferer; and men are attracted and won by the singular excellence of a character that combines in it so many unconquerable graces. They see them ready, for the sake of an unseen object, to forego every possession of this life; they see

them relinquishing every prospect, most gratifying to nature; they behold them ready to endure, rejoicing in tribulation, fearless of the creature, meeting bonds and death, blessing their murderers, and rising triumphantly above every device of Satan and every machination from men, and they are justly amazed at the development of such mysterious principles. Through these observations they are led to make deeper inquiry, and in many instances to unite in the same bold confession. This influence is not confined to the more public and persecuted Christians; every follower of Jesus has his particular circle, in which he moves, and in which he is called to exhibit the courage of faith; and in his measure he will be owned in a similar way, and find that his resolution in the cross is one of the greatest means by which he is instrumental to silence the blasphemer, to convince the gainsayer, and to stimulate and confirm the upright inquirer. Since the spirit of a saint is that of charity, these considerations have great weight with him; he desires the salvation of his fellow-sinners, and counts it a privilege if by any means, even by his sufferings and death, he may be instrumental to lead the thoughts and affections of men to the Saviour whom he loves.

When conflict, and toil, and danger are over, what will be the glorious result to the courageous soldier of the cross? If in this life,

amidst so much infirmity and necessity, he receives such measures of the eternal mercies of God, what may he not expect, when he shall put off the body, and meet his Redeemer in the everlasting world! He is not left in uncertainty respecting these future scenes: Christ has declared, that he who confesses Him before men, He will confess before the Father, and in the presence of the holy angels, and has multiplied His gracious assurances of acceptance in that world where all is rest and peace. The provision of eternal life is the free work of the covenant that is sovereign in all its parts, and in every degree of its blessed communications: but it has pleased the Lord to determine graciously to acknowledge the work of the Spirit in His children, proportionably to their diligence in the life of faith: and although *all* His redeemed shall arise in triumph, and be crowned in eternal victory over every enemy, it is evident that He will impart of His smile a more abundant inward fulness, in proportion to the vigour of the integrity with which He has been confessed on earth. Therefore, whilst all His children are justly looking for the day when He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy Master's rest;" they have a right to look for an "*abundant* entrance," of peculiar kind, when they have fought manfully through the troops of their adversaries, and have not started from the more

a ordinary pains to which they may have n called in Christ's cause.

The effect of conviction upon these truths is v to be sought for in our own character. If are amongst such as are ashamed of Jesus, whould take warning. Do we consider *who* : is, of whom we are ashamed. The majesty His glorious name is eternal—the establish-ent of His kingdom and judgment is sure: e objects for which we are willing thus to sult and dishonour Him, are perishing—and e reasonings by which we satisfy our con-iences, are delusion. What must be the onsequence of living and dying in such an vowed and visible alienation from God, and he only way of salvation? There is no other efuge, there is no change of God's decree, hat they who are not in Christ are not in life nd safety. Is it not madness then, to refuse he only sure mercies, and to sacrifice for the uncertain, unsound, or dying smiles and plea-sures of this world, every thing that can render the unchanging world a place of repose for the immortal soul? O let the heart tremble at the thought of being denied by the Son of God—let the soul be alarmed for its safety, and defer no longer to seek a refuge in Jesus, confessing His name. Perhaps you hesitate; not quite deter-mined to take up the cross, yet not willing entirely to forego the blessings which you be-

lieve are annexed to a Christian profession :— but hesitation will prove destruction, if dying in this state; for he that is not *with* the Lord is considered *against* Him. Look also at your own approaching necessities: a death bed will come, or otherwise a death blow, cutting off all opportunity, and plunging the soul into eternity. Who *then* will be needed, or where is the upholding strength that shall prove sufficient to deliver from ruin and misery! Vain will it be, that friends and relatives stand weeping round your dying or dead body; tears such as these will not quench the fire of hell, nor human sympathy prevail to comfort the condemned soul: Jesus alone, *confessing* the soul, and owning it amongst His blood-bought, can impart any of the remedies which will be required to the evils consequent upon sin: and so long as there is no confession of *Him*, there is no evidence that such will be the last hour. This conviction should come like the determining weight into the scale, decide the doubtful case, and banish hesitation from the breast.

To those who already confess the Saviour, this subject may be serviceable, particularly as connected with the preceding on Shame, serving to quicken holy determination against all those occasions wherein the regenerate are in danger of acting with cowardice. Let it not be supposed, that such persons, having made their stand against the world, may now cease to

fight, or that they will not require the *nourishment* of their Christian courage. It is well known by the experienced that there is not any time when confession is required, where temptation may not assail the soul; and such knowledge should make us live dependently, and put us upon continual prayer, that we may be kept from every species of the sin of being ashamed of Christ. We may be grateful for every instance wherein we have owned our blessed Lord. It was His grace that caused us to triumph. We may also trust Him for further supplies; for His grace is inexhaustible and unwearied. However weak or timid our natural character may be, we may confidently believe that our strength shall be equal to our day. Nevertheless, we are to use the means, and set before us every consideration by which we may be stimulated to this necessary and excellent disposition. Particularly let us set before us the great pattern, "Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;" and, meditating upon the example which He has given us, through all the interesting and awful scenes in which He was called to holy courage, "Arm ourselves with the same mind," and tread closely in His blessed steps. He has passed through these assaults in a human nature, assumed for our sakes: He has triumphed in the confession of a cause, costing Him unutterable grief and pain, and which He freely accepted that we

might be eternally blest. O let us never return His love by basely shrinking from the cross, nor ever so dishonour Him, and our own name, as to be afraid of demonstrating that He is our Friend, and we are His.

Can we prove from the Scriptures that Christian courage is an effect of divine grace in the regenerate?

"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy word."

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Acts iv. 29, 31. See also Eph. vi. 19, 20. Acts xxviii. 15. Heb. xi. 34, 35. 2 Tim. iv. 11.

Does it arise out of the Spirit's operation upon the mind and heart, convincing of the excellency of the faith of Christ, the necessity of confessing it, and the desire after an interest in it?

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." Rom. i. 16. See also Cant. vii. 13.

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10. See also Isa. ii. 2, 3. Zech. viii. 21—23. Isa. xliv. 5.

"Whither is thy beloved gone, thou fairest

among women, that we may seek Him with thee." Cant. vi. 1. See also Cant. i. 7. 1 John iv. 2.

Will Christian courage produce any visible demonstration of discipleship?

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." Acts v. 29, 30.

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." Mal. iii. 16.

"I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed." Psalm cxix. 46. See also Mark vi. 18. Dan. vi. 10.

"What are the benefits resulting from Christian courage?

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." 1 John iv. 15.

"Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." Matt. x. 32.

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Acts iv. 13.

"Because thou hast kept the word of my pa-

tience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. iii. 10.

By what means should Christians seek an enlarged degree of Christian courage?

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14.

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh arm yourselves with the same mind." 1 Pet. iv. 1.

IMPENITENCE.

IMPENITENCE is a want of compunction or sorrow, for the commission of an offence. We have probably a quick discernment into the nature of the evil, when we view it in reference to the earthly interests in which we are severally engaged. We can scarcely be in the habit of observing the incidents which perpetually occur, without finding occasions wherein we have to regret that such a disposition is prevalent; and by allowing the reflections to turn in this channel, we shall perceive that it is one of the sad effects following upon the corruption of our nature, and that every sinner is a partaker of this evil. In children the sin is continually demonstrated, amidst those daily trespasses or errors which they commit. How constantly do we find them hardened against conviction; and even when detected and reproved, resolved upon throwing off every degree of compunction or remorse; and even when moved by fear to make confession, and to express the language

of regret, how most frequently is the absence of real contrition immediately betrayed,—no amendment of the fault, no abasement for its existence being discoverable beyond the transitory seasons of remonstrance or disgrace. It is a state of harshness sometimes awfully exhibited by men, under visitations wherein we might reasonably expect a great degree of sorrow and a visible expression of humiliation. How many wretched malefactors are reduced, by their offences committed against civil law, to the shame of an ignominious death! They are condemned at the bar of judgment, they are consigned to a dismal cell, loaded with chains and infamy; they are brought out to die as a public spectacle, and surrender their lives a forfeit for the crimes they have perpetrated: and yet, in these humiliating circumstances, they preserve a daring hardiness, which bids defiance to the horrors of their condition, and by which they give frightful evidence of desperate impenitency. Nor are the more private scenes of sinful life less stained with a spirit thus disingenuous and unrelenting. In the common connexions in life, we continually observe or betray a disposition, wherein there is no inclination to admit the conviction of personal fault, even where we might, if ingenuous, detect palpable error; and very few persons are possessed of a disposition to be ready unfeignedly to grieve for having occasioned offence,

or to feel compunction for the error by which peace may have been broken. These are evidences of a *nature* that is impenitent, and, although they seem chiefly confined to the concerns of this world, give a sufficient and awful intimation of what is the state of the *heart* in this respect, in interests which relate to the world to come. It is consequent upon the fall of man that he is become a wretched and hardened offender before God. When Adam transgressed, he was not only stripped of his distinguishing possessions, both in his natural and moral condition, but he was reduced into a state of positive ruin, and his nature was brought under the dominion of powers of darkness, hurrying him onward in revolt and rebellion: he lost the beauties of Eden, he lost the ornaments of the inward paradise, where holiness had been accustomed to prevail, and he also became capable of transgression and relentlessness in its practice. That this was the effect of sin upon human nature was immediately evinced by Adam himself, who, so far from feeling true compunction or sorrow for his offence, instantly criminated another, and strove to evade the force of conviction which should have ensued. Thus we may trace the sin of impenitence up to the parent spring, and find it like all other evils mingled in our very nature, and a part of our corruption as descendants of a fallen parent. When the Scriptures describe the state of man

previously to regeneration by the Holy Ghost, language is adopted that confirms this testimony. It is affirmed that the sinner is become "*past feeling*," that he does not like to retain God in his knowledge, having a determined preference of sin; and although *knowing* the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Man is represented also under figures which sufficiently proclaim this hardness of an impenitent nature; he is said to have a neck like an iron sinew, and a brow of brass, that is stubbornly refusing to bow to the divine law, and impudently refusing to be ashamed at transgression. This inward depravity is invariably attended with outward demonstration, and presents us with a horrible spectacle of ruined and guilty transgressors, in the very gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, waging a desperate war with the Almighty himself, and madly bidding defiance to the dreadful and eternal Judge.

The evidences of this impenitency demand our attention: they vary in their form, and on this account, it is not improbable, that many might be imposed upon, and overlook the existence of the sin, confining their observation too much to those broad and visible marks which strike conviction to the common beholder. When we turn our observation upon the thou-

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dded which will complete the measure, and
when this is done, it shall overflow with judg-
ment, and leave him to drink the wormwood
and the gall for ever and ever. Dreadful is the
weight of condemnation, and most frightful the
stupid insensibility of this condition; and when
we call to mind how many millions are *in* this

condition at this very instant, we may well admit a solemn awe upon the mind, and deplore the hardness of a sinner's heart!

It does not, however, invariably follow, that they, who live in the open breach of divine commands, are at peace; or, that they can make themselves victorious over certain convictions, which occasionally harrass them. Many a transgressor is *miserable* in his way, and pursues after happiness in vain. Many are haunted by the recollection of their offences, and cannot entirely dismiss the apprehension that wrath may overtake them at last. Yet they refuse to repent, or to admit any thing like compunction. They continue to tread in the same paths, and labour constantly to supply themselves with those common arguments by which their fellow-sinners have prevailed, for so many centuries, to benumb the awakening passions, and silence the intruding recollections that would give them pain. It is easy to say, *God is merciful:* it is a very ready argument, *others have escaped by a death-bed compunction:* and notwithstanding the remaining doubts which may occur, lest these refuges should not be sound, the soul is willing rather to confide in this uncertain hope, than to yield to sorrow for sin, and real compunction. Thus the very goodness of God displayed in this long sufferance, is abused to the furtherance of a sinful course; and after

"his hardness and impenitent heart," the transgressor proceeds "treasuring up for himself wrath against the day of wrath."

Impenitence is equally demonstrated by some persons, of an exceedingly different constitution and state of mind, in whom a superficial observer might hope the genuine experience of contrition was felt. There are those, who *profess* a very penitent state, and would desire to persuade themselves, and others, that they have an unfeigned sorrow for their sins: they *talk* much of the *need* there is for humiliation and distress: they will not only admit that they are sinners like other men, but they will deplore their own *particular* trespasses, many times expatiating upon their strange perverseness, their continual falls, their bad dispositions, their hateful tempers, &c. &e. they will write against themselves much more bitter things than their fellow-creature is disposed to do; and even, when some persons moved by their words, are disposed to attempt the administration of comfort to what they suppose to be a broken heart, they will repel the attempt, and exclaim, you know not half how vile I am. The picture which they draw of spiritual misery presently affects their *own* imagination, and touched by the tale they have related, they will begin to weep, and many times shed torrents of tears. Promises of amendment also will not unfrequently accompany these emotions, and there will be inward resolve to try to do

better, and correspondent expressions both to God and man. All this *looks* like contrition. But in how many fearful instances, is it found utterly deceiving and vain! During the whole of these excitements and expressions, sins are allowed, if not so boldly and visibly, as in the examples of such as have none of these feelings, yet in the same indulgence of *secret* sins; and if it can be committed without detection, the heart is little troubled; or, if troubled, it is only a transitory grief. We admit that there are instances, wherein this expression of contrition is attended with the apparently sincere reformation of life, and for a season a man may seem to act consistently with these emotions, and by violent resolutions abstain from his pursuit of sin; but this does not ensure that his heart is delivered from impenitency,—and, on the contrary, is frequently a very short-lived amendment; the next powerful temptation throws down all his resolves; and although he may, like Ahab and Jehoram of old, put on sackcloth and walk "softly," he may after all "return like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," his *nature* is not changed, and sin is not *distasteful*, it is still the element, or the food, in which he delights, and he will not long abstain from gratification. After all his words, and tears, and promises, therefore, we find him impenitent; and that he has not had any real compunction or sorrow for sin.

There is an evidence, in men of this description, which is also visible in others of a more decent and orderly course, by which a state of impenitency is clearly discoverable. It is that of low thoughts of the person and work of Christ. Wherever this prevails, we may draw the just conclusion, that no penitence has been felt. Since contrition is attended with spiritual discernment into the nature of the divine law, and of the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of Christ, it will follow, that when a man does not see any marvellous wonder in the work of salvation, or when his heart is cold and insensible upon the subject of Jesus' incarnation, death and victory, he cannot have known the fear of judgment to come, he cannot have groaned under the sense of a guilty nature, nor have felt the efficacy of Jesus' blood: had he ever been a penitent, he would have known the preciousness of an atonement for his sin, and in consequence, his spirit would be ready to bow at the Cross, and his soul would delight in contemplating the triumphs of Jesus when He rose from the dead. His low and unworthy thoughts of these mysteries, proclaim his impenitency; and we need no other demonstration to prove that he has no compunction for offences before God. How many thousands of persons, by this rule, must be judged impenitent! What though the Christian name is borne, and the ordinances of the Christian faith are observed; what though a

decent kind of morality is preserved amongst men, and the witness of a fellow-creature might give a favourable statement of character and pretensions: where is the *broken heart*? where the grateful appeal to a crucified Redeemer? where the looking upon Him who was pierced, and the affliction for the sins that were the burden on *His* soul? These being absent, there is no contrition: penitence is not known, and the heart remains in its native hardness and insensibility.

We might rejoice, if, amidst these affecting examples of impenitency, we might still hope that they were confined to such as never advanced further than a mere baptismal confession of the name of Christ. Alas! we are not permitted to take this consolation, for turning our eyes upon that proportion of the christianized world, in which a more *serious* profession of the religion of Jesus is made, we discover a fearful absence of those genuine marks of contrition, which the work of the Spirit will produce. Amongst professors there is a visible spirit of haughtiness, of uncharitableness, of earthliness: we see them also full of levity, careless in conversation, taking no heed lest a stumbling block is placed in the way: they are not vigilant, self-guarded, and disciplined! How could this be, were they filled with compunction for sins that are past? We are assured that real sorrow for offences will beget hatred of them, and must

generate a lowly, modest, and gracious self-government; and the absence of such essential parts of a state of grace must decidedly prove, that the heart has never known the powerful application of the hammer of God's word, which, it is expressly affirmed, *breaks the rock in pieces*.

There is something exceedingly alarming in a state of impenitence, when we further consider, that by its own deceiving nature it tends to increase the distance of the soul from God, and that a man, under the dominion of this evil, sinks lower and lower in the way of destruction, and death. So great is the power of this infatuating evil, that it will attend a man throughout the whole of his mortal days, and will frequently present us with the most monstrous exhibitions of total insensibility to every approaching desolation, that is speedily coming upon the soul. Have we not beheld, may we not at this moment behold, many a grey head, where there is a confirmed hard heart. Sinners who have lived even beyond their threescore years and ten, filling up every moment of this long probation with incessant transgression, and never seeking in any instance to glorify God according to the divine revelation, who, notwithstanding, are as perfectly satisfied, and resolved upon dying as they have lived, as if there were no revelation, and no God, and no future judgment! They have lived and sinned,

and had opportunities, and have felt and witnessed effects of transgression, which might have suggested a better lesson, yet they are unmoved, and impenitency has attended them up to this last stage upon earth! On death beds, also, the same impenitence is frequently visible. The head is laid on the pillow, with senseless and relentless indifference as to the time of retribution. Sometimes no degree of remorse is felt: the deluded mind takes a self-complacent retrospect of the past, counts up the scanty score of imaginary good works, annexes to them an inordinate value, thinks them justly rewardable with an eternal crown, and in the self-gratification felt on this review, loses all sense of transgression, and buries every offence in oblivion and peace. Sometimes regrets are felt and expressed, and the dying man will say, that were his life to be spent over again, he would choose a different course: but even the finite mind can frequently detect the unsoundness of these excitements, and discover that *contrition* is not felt: whilst, in many awful instances, wherein it has pleased the Lord to lengthen out existence and to raise such as were apparently in their last moments to a longer trial upon earth, we have had the uncertainty of such professed repentance tremendously verified, by the sinner's unblushing return to his crimes, and his impenitency in the monstrous continuance of the very offences which he seemed to bewail. They, who have

been in the habit of attending sick-beds, will be in the possession of some such awful examples, and, probably, at this moment, can call to mind the names and characters of such as have scarcely returned to the light of the sun, and the avocations of this life, before they have blasphemed the name of their helper, and rioted in the deeds that Jehovah has prohibited by every sacred consideration. Surprising as it might appear when the pains of hell are remembered, yet this impenitence carries its fearful character even into that dark chamber of suffering and woe. There is not one penitent in all that vast multitude of condemned and wretched rebels. Sorrow and wailing are indeed the inseparable attendants upon the state of condemnation, and, were it possible, the prisoners would escape from their torments; but there is no compunction for the commission of offence, further than as it has brought suffering upon the transgressor. We may observe this, both in the state of condemned spirits from amongst men, and in the spirit of the fallen angels. Our Lord was pleased mercifully to unfold the region of the condemned, and to give His disciples an intimation of its extent of misery: in so doing he presented to view the wretched *Dives:* but let us mark the language of that wretched offender, I beseech thee send Lazarus, &c. for I am *tormented* in this flame: and again when he urged for his brethren, it was lest they also

should come into that place of *torment*. Here was no sense of the evil of sin, no confession, no view of the *desert* of transgression; it was all the sense of *torment*, and selfish and destitute of any thing like contrition. So also of devils, we read, that their whole business is that of blasphemy and war against God, and seeking who may be devoured! These are evidences of an unsubdued, unrelenting, unrepenting state, determined upon the acts of rebellion,—and these are demonstrations of what must necessarily be the confirmed condition of such as are in hell, for there is no change of the *nature*: therefore there is no contrition, and can be none. Thus we see that impenitence is such a fearful state, that it bids defiance to every thing which, we might conclude, would soften, convince, or subdue: no length of days, no experience of mercy or judgment, no dying pains, no prospects of eternity, no pains of hell, no experience of the wages of sin, will impart *sorrow for* sin: the hardness of a natural heart is beyond all these considerations, and desperately fights and contends for its own way, and revolts against divine authority even through the blackness of the abyss of hell itself!

If we accept this statement, according to the confirming witness to be gathered from God's word, we shall be prepared to exercise a spirit of corresponding vigilance. It is our *own* nature

that thus lies open before us for inspection, and in which this monstrous condemning condition is found. We cannot deny the evidence that must crowd upon our observation, if we candidly review our own lives; for in the past career which we contemplate, we trace the demonstration of individual impenitence. We may number up our broken Sabbaths, our trespass of every hallowing precept, our *ease* and levity in the very arms and delusion of sin and death, and our entire insensibility to the curse and judgment of the Almighty! We may detect the unsoundness of many a confession, tear, resolve, and seeming contrition, and prove by the fruits that penitence was not there. We may look to the coldness, formality, and death, that have attended our professed acknowledgment of Jesus' name; and we shall quickly perceive, that in this great interest, we have carried within us an unmoved, unsoftened heart. Perhaps at this very instant, if we narrowly inspect our heart and conscience, we shall have reason to confess that this sin of nature is our sin, and that a hard and impenitent heart still beats within our breast. And even if privileged by the softening grace of the Holy Ghost, to know and feel the peculiar affections of a penitent, whilst we ascribe it to grace that such a disposition has been wrought in us, we shall still lament that symptoms of the native disposition are also discoverable, and that we

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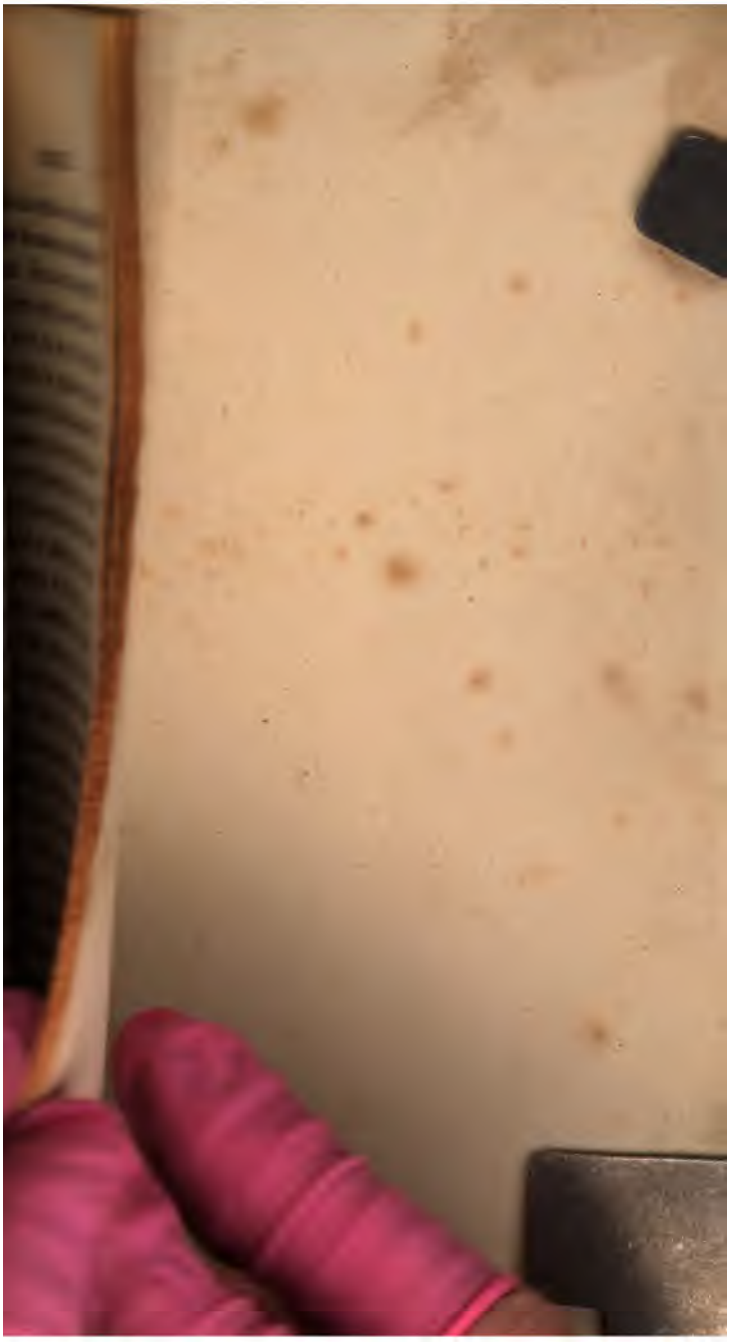


Is a state of impenitence ever discoverable in persons who profess to be penitent?

"Nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37. See also Hos. vii. 14. 1 Kings xxi. 27.

Will impenitence accompany a man unto death, so that he meets the last hour without alarm or humiliation?

"There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm: They are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men." Psalm lxxiii. 4, 5.

Is it possible for a child of God to trespass in a disposition of impenitence?

"And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." 2 Sam. xi. 5.

What must be the final consequence of a state of impenitence?

"Suppose ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Luke xiii. 4, 5. See also Luke xvi. 23—26. Acts xiii. 40, 41.

PENITENCE.

PENITENCE is a disposition of compunction or sorrow for sin, when an offender, conscious of having transgressed, is filled with ingenuous distress on account of his provocation. As a Christian grace, it is one of the most excellent operations of the Spirit; and it is always to be considered essentially necessary, as a part of the new creation in Christ Jesus. There are, however, many demonstrations of feelings that may be mistaken for this fruit of the Spirit; and many occasions wherein the unregenerate may seem to experience what corresponds with this requirement: hence it is rendered necessary, that they who instruct, and they who learn, should be minute and careful in the delineation of the true disposition. Instances occur wherein a naturally candid or amiable temper may feel and express great sorrow of mind, on account of some trespass, without possessing any genuine humiliation before God. It is possible to be filled with regret, on account of having offended

those whom we love, respect, or from whom we hope for benefits; and, under the impression, there may be many expressions which convey the sentiment of grief, and which deprecate the consequence which folly might produce. Nor is this feeling confined to interests which merely relate to things of human kind: the great interests of eternity may, in some instances, give rise to the emotion; or concerns which bear upon religion may be the occasion of this compunction in the unchanged heart. It is not unfrequent that the followers of Jesus, being the objects of general disesteem, become the subject of conversation, and the objects against whom persecution, calumny, and ill will are expressed. Sometimes the naturally amiable are led to join in the act of oppression or ridicule, and a kind of violence seems to be committed against the usual course to which their native good humour disposes them. This arises out of the natural enmity of their sinful heart, which is, equally with the most unamiable, wholly opposed to spiritual objects. Nevertheless, a passing regret will generally follow, when, upon reflection, they call to mind how uncharitably and unkindly they spoke against such persons: they are ready bitterly to accuse themselves, and to say, "Wherefore did I join with the multitude in calumniating persons who are quite unknown to me? Why did I unite in the irony and ridicule cast upon men who never

did me any injury, and who are evidently harmless, however they may be deceived? This was unworthy and cruel, and a trespass against the law of justice and charity." In this reasoning there is an ingenuous acknowledgment of having erred, and an attendent compunction of heart that is exceedingly painful; self-reproach is unfeigned: yet there is nothing of *godly* sorrow here; the mind is in its unchanged ignorance and distance from God, and the reproach is mingled with displeasure against self, as having acted inconsistently with its *own character*, and as having offended against dispositions which it is accustomed to approve. This kind of sorrow was remarkably evinced, in a character that in other respects was a monster of cruelty and sin. *Herod* deeply regretted that he had rashly exposed the life of John Baptist, and was *sorry* for the occasion in which he had involved himself in a deed of murder and injustice, against a man whom he could not but respect. Some men may have a deep compunction for their offences, on account of the evil effects which follow upon themselves, and may not only express but really feel an unfeigned desire to recal what they have done. We have many Scripture examples of this description. We well remember the wretched Pharaoh, in whose bosom pangs of real anguish prevailed, whilst he contemplated the ruin and desolation that his sins brought on the land, and who could exclaim, "I have sinned,

entreat the Lord for me." Balaam also could experience alarm under the apprehension of immediate judgment from God, and as if he were an ingenuous penitent, could say, "I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me, now therefore if it displease Thee, I will get me back again." Saul could be brought to confession under pangs of fear, lest a worse thing should come upon him, and earnestly entreating Samuel, he could urge his request, "I have sinned, yet honor me now, I pray thee, before my people." Nor should we ever forget the miserable Judas, who, filled with unbearable agony, brought back the wages of his iniquity, and exclaimed, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." These examples sufficiently prove that wicked and unchanged men may experience the bitterness of sorrow for their offences, and even before *God* bewail their folly, and that at the same time they are utterly destitute of any thing like genuine penitence, and answer not to the Scripture account of godly sorrow for sin.

We have now to satisfy our minds upon the subject of true repentance, and must turn to the investigation of this disposition, that we may search after its peculiarities, and discover wherein it differs from natural emotions.

In the first place, it is peculiar as to its origin, for it doth not arise out of a miserable selfish

nature, but out of the counsels of the glorious mind of Jehovah. It was shown in the subject of impenitency, that no man, in his natural state, is otherwise than a wretched and hardened offender against the laws of God; and that there is no such thing as a spirit of holy grief for sin, in a heart that is destitute of God's renewing grace. We therefore look out of the creature for the spring of this blessed operation, and find it in the everlasting covenant of God in Christ. This covenant is the source of all the mercies which descend from above upon the ruined world; and amongst the wonderful provisions that it secures, we discover this essential gift of repentance before God. It is the determination of Jehovah to bring back His banished ones, and to restore them to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness in Himself. This could not be effected without the grace of penitence, for the wanderer must be made to understand his own provocations, and to bewail the distance of his soul from home. Since this disposition could never spring up in the rocky heart of the transgressor, without some omnipotent power to smite the rock, and cause the waters to flow, it entered into the counsels of Jehovah that this should be accomplished, and that man's flinty heart should be made to yield the sacred stream. The blessing is treasured up in the glorious Head of the church, Christ Jesus. All divine impartations must proceed

from Him by whom they have been purchased. Jesus' propitiatory blood and prevailing merit, are the procuring price, through which salvation in all its branches is extended to man; and therefore to Him the eye of faith is directed, as exalted by the Father's own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to *give repentance* and remission of sins; and as appointed, in His covenant reign, to communicate to the heirs of salvation the softened heart, and subdued repenting will.

This blessing is effected through the descent of the Holy Ghost, who comes forth as the propitiated friend of man, that he may bear witness of Jesus and perform the works that are needful in exalting the kingdom of the Saviour. Jesus instructed his disciples in this truth, telling them, that when He the Holy Ghost should come, he would convince the world of sin. This is done when the operation is savingly entered into the heart, and there accomplishing the application of the divine testimony, in such a way as shall bring down the loftiness of native pride, and lay the sinner low at Jesus' feet. The manner in which this is wrought in the soul, is very strikingly expressed in the xxxist chapter of Jeremiah 19th verse, " Surely *after* that I was turned, I repented; and *after* that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my

youth." This short passage conveys to us the method of the divine operations, and this method is commended to us, upon reflection, as altogether wise and necessary. So long as a man is blind, and ignorant, he will not see *cause* for repentance: he is surprised that you make such strong claims upon him, and would so earnestly enforce the necessity of such deep humiliation, and, so far from answering the claim, satisfies himself in an imaginary virtue, excellency, goodness, or comparative innocence, which he supposes will justify him before God. If he is to be penitent, therefore, he must, in the first place be *instructed*, and his reflections and views must be *turned:* instead of hasting in the broad way that leads to destruction, and keeping his eyes and expectations upon the delusive visions of the earth, he must be made to understand that he is in the way of ruin, and must turn and look on him whom he has pierced. This is what the Holy Ghost effects by his divine power, taking away the scales from the eyes, and dispersing the shades of darkness from the mind, so producing shame, grief, compunction, and sorrow.

The subjects which form the theme on which the Spirit treats are exceedingly affecting and important. His object is in the first place, to convince the sinner that there is something more awful in sin than he has been accustomed to believe: for this end he reveals to him the

glorious nature of Jehovah, shows him the sanctity that attends the divine perfections, and makes him to possess a holy awe of the dreadful glory that encompasses the eternal name. When he looks upon sin as contrasted with this divine excellency, he is made to behold it in its accursed character, as *dissimilar* to God, and thus he obtains a horror and hatred of what is evidently abhorrent to the divine Nature, and opposed to so excellent a Being. Following upon these views, the mind becomes alarmed at the consciousness of personal defilement; and feeling that there is an awful participation of the evil in his own soul, the sinner begins to tremble at the desert of his sins, and to loathe himself for his *own* dissimilarity to God. He calls to mind the various ways in which he has trespassed by thought, word, and deed, in a way that manifestly proclaims his entire loss of all conformity with the divine nature, and in consequence he has low thoughts of himself, and contemplates his condition as one debased, unworthy, and vile. This conviction is sufficient to fill him with self-loathing, even although there might be no future consequences to his condemned soul. But, in addition, he feels and owns, that the desert of sin is woful, and that if he dies in an unpardoned state, he must inevitably be banished everlastingly from that Presence, in which nothing so unholy as he feels himself to be can dwell: thus he is *instructed*. But how

shall he be *turned?* and whither shall he turn, to what quarter direct his anxious mind, and where fix his inquiring eye? This solicitude is answered by the attendant operation of the Spirit, who not only convinces of sin, but opens to the view that wonderful expiation which has been made on Calvary; by an invincible and mighty force, the Holy Ghost lays hold upon the mind and soul, and turns them to that Object: Jesus crucified is unveiled, and the dying pains of a Saviour, in the character of a Surety and Sacrifice, are now revealed: the sinner looks on the bleeding Lamb, and beholds the provision on whom his guilt was laid; and while he hopes in the grace that is thus abundant, he experiences an increase of ingenuous shame—he now sees that sin is not only dissimilar, and hateful to God, but that its expiation has cost the mysterious and amazing price of His own blood, and that his sins have not only been the ruin of his soul, but have been part of that heavy load under which the Saviour sweat drops of blood, and died upon the tree. Thus he is *turned*, and, with his whole mind and soul fixed on these new and surprising discoveries, he becomes a *penitent*, and feels and exhibits the genuine grace, that is produced in all the blood bought family.

Penitence is a disposition that will not be concealed: it has attendant effects, that will render

the penitent visible and known in the eyes of observers, and that will bring him continually before the Lord with an avowal of this experience. We should be equally solicitous to ascertain these effects, as we have been to discriminate in the inward operation; for they will invariably accompany true repentance, and may serve as marks by which to direct our judgment of the professed repentance of others, and of our own.

True penitence is attended with a peculiar expression of self-abasement: it will of course be the feeling of the judgment and heart, that there is nothing but vileness in that which is of the flesh; and such persons will adopt Scripture language and be ready to exclaim, "Behold I am vile." But it will advance further than this, and generate a spirit of humiliation and resignation, that mingles in the various experience of the pilgrimage. When sin is committed, God is displeased; and although He will freely forgive, He will also *chasten*, sometimes by sickness, at other times by mental afflictions; or He will send blasting and desolation upon substance, family, affections, in some way testifying to the soul that it is an evil and bitter thing to offend against the Lord. Under any of these circumstances, the *penitent* experiences peculiar influences: he does not murmur, revolt, and complain, but being conscious of his desert, and sorry for his sin, he thinks no trial more

than should be sent, and he submits to the correction with abasement of spirit: thus his language is, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

Another peculiarity, belonging to true penitence, is a readiness to *confess*, and to make restitution. Restitution to God he can never make: in his own spiritual condition, he is as a ruined bankrupt, and has nothing to pay: he can however appeal to the riches and treasure of his Surety, and plead the excellency of that offering by which He made atonement. Confession he will bring, and, without reserve or concealment, will lay open the whole secret of his heart, and tell the Lord all that he has done. Again and again he explores his own life, and his own spirit, that he may continually bring the malady, and confess the disease, to Him, who alone can cure; whilst he desires, with unfeigned sincerity, that every wound may be probed by the great Physician, and not one evil remain unexposed, or unmortified within him. Where his offences have been against man, he will be ready humbly to confess that he has erred: more especially, if by any sin he has put a stumbling-block in the way of his fellow-creature, he will be willing and desirous to remove it out of the way; and if this cannot be done without exposing himself to humiliation, and expressing his grief and conviction, he will not hesitate to comply with this demar

some cases he may have it in his power to make restitution to the creature, and he will rejoice in so doing. If he has injured any by calumny, by dishonesty, by unkindness, or in any other way, he will labour to make amends by removing the evil, or restoring what has been unjustly taken away; and all this from the genuine principles of the new creature, which invariably press after holiness, and are intent upon glorifying God.

The penitent will always *forsake* the sin which he hates: this is an essential part of sincere sorrow: it would be wholly inconsistent, were he to be bewailing his trespasses one moment, and rejoicing in them the next; and could he rise from his knees, after making vehement professions of grief for sin, and immediately renew his pursuit of the evil, he would have reason to charge himself with hypocrisy, and to doubt the reality of his penitence. The upright mourner will resolutely give himself to the crucifixion of his lusts: he encounters sin as an *adversary;* and although it costs him much to sacrifice, and contend with, his abominations, he will not relinquish the hope of final victory, nor cease to labour after the reduction of the empire of darkness within him: the divine change wrought in him has changed his appetites, so that he cannot admit a relish for those things which are opposed to the heavenly life, nor feed upon those destroying pleasures of

sense, that he now uprightly relinquishes for ever. This renunciation of sin is attended with the diligent cultivation of all the graces that distinguish God's child; and he will exhibit, in the lively demonstration of God's triumphant love, the decided renewal of his soul into the image of Him by whom he is redeemed.

It may be interesting to us to remember also, that this disposition is a *lasting* attendant upon the believer: he never parts from this companion from the moment in which they meet; and although there may be different degrees and forms in which it is demonstrated, it is always the disposition that lodges in his soul. It is *imparted*, as we have seen, in his regeneration, but it is with him in his progressive attainments in the heavenly life; and throughout the whole of his wilderness state, it is the grace that lives in closest association with his faith. There is not a grace of the new life that is not, as it were, *folded up* in this disposition: his prayers, his tears, his labours, his conflicts, are all encompassed with penitence; for he sees constant need for humiliation in his best services, and learns to understand that even his repentance itself is so mixed and infirm that it calls for atonement, and is justly a subject of self-abasement. In proportion to the knowledge, the spiritual sensibility, the humility, and the love of the soul, penitence will prevail;

and so far from being less prominent in the advance of the believer, than it was in his entrance upon pilgrimage, it will the more abundantly imbue his whole course, the nearer he approaches to his final rest. When reaching his last stage through the desert, and laid in his dying conflict, even then will penitence take a still more decided tone. The renewed retrospect of the past awakens new grief for sin; the clearer light of the gospel unfolds to him stronger reasons for self-abhorrence; and many times, even with the gate of heaven opened to his view, and the assurance of acceptance burning and strong within his heart, the language of a penitent is affectingly heard; he speaks in deep contrition of soul, he repeats the sense he has of his own provocations, and will many times wet his pillow with tears, that flow from a broken heart, and are the effect of the repentance which pervades his mind. When we follow the liberated spirit into eternity, and attend the redeemed soul into the company of the blessed, who dwell around the throne, what is it we continue to witness? It is true, tears are gone, and sighs are heard no more, neither is there any remembrance that can occasion pain; yet the language is penitence, and the action is that of self-emptiness. High is the song that swells the blissful chorus, ascribing glory to the *Lamb that was slain*, who hath *redeemed* the soul by His blood: and universal is the token of self-

renunciation, for the whole company agree to cast their crowns before the throne, and to own that salvation is extended to the lost. Penitence, therefore, attends the heir of glory, even when he passes to his inheritance above, and although expressed in such a way as accords with a condition of complete deliverance, is not the less vehement and earnest in its character.

There are unspeakable blessings attendant also upon this state of soul, even here in this vale of tears; and strange as it may appear to the natural mind, it is a state of unutterable *peace*. The penitence of a believer is not slavish terror and bondage: even under first conviction, when there is much of anguish and alarm, there is an inward support and anticipation of mercy and relief, that is generally shed into the heart with a *measure* of peace, or a mixture of hope; and in proportion to the sight obtained of God in covenant for man, the consolation assumes a more powerful influence. Many are the seasons wherein the penitent possesses this inward peace, even when bathed in tears or laying prostrate on the ground: *visibly* to the sight of *man*, he seems miserable, yet invisibly, and in the sight of God, he has the applied balm of Jesus' blood, and the faith that realizes forgiveness and rest. Thus God's Child may be like the child of an earthly parent, laying in the bosom where he feels that love and kindness and peace abound, yet weeping under the sense of having offended

against a parent's affection and care; and many times, the most sacred and the sweetest moments of the believer are found in these occasions of deep and painful penitence. There are also times of unutterable joy and gladness, when the sense of pardon is given in such power, that the soul is lifted above all pressure, and bids farewel to sadness. Redeeming love is a theme full of exhilaration, and the harp is strung to notes of highest praise; the conscience is in peace, the mind is holy and serene, the spirit is filled with love, and liberty of access is possessed with not a cloud to darken the heavens above;—these are privileges richly bestowed upon the penitent, to whom the Lord delights to communicate the fulness of His promises, and to show how great is the portion that has been obtained for sinners in their atoning sacrifice.

These considerations should be received fully and freely, in order to prepare us for the mercies which await the repenting soul, and that we may be delivered from erroneously conceiving that penitence is a state of discomfort and gloom. It is in fact the way to peace, and no man is in the possession of sound and lasting comfort, who has not entered upon it through this medium. We ought to apply the whole as an individual address, that is to be verified in our personal experience if we are in a state of salvation; and so far from shrinking from the touchstone, we ought to press the soul to the diligent

investigation of what is so absolutely requisite, if we escape the condemnation of hell. We know that we have sins, we should also know that they will sink us to perdition, if their weight is not removed from our guilty head. Vain is it to plead innocence, or youth, or good intentions, or future purposes, these are lying refuges, we stand chargeable with a sufficient score of transgressions to bring us in undone when we stand at God's bar, and the youngest offender must perish for his offence if he is to answer for his own trespass. Is it not madness and folly to waste the rapid moments in standing to *dispute* the fact, or in striving to demonstrate exactly our *proportion* of guilt, whilst the curse and the pit are nearer to us every instant, and wrath is coming onwards, rolled by the burning wheels of Jehovah's awful presence, who will sit upon His throne and judge the nations? How much more adviseable is the humility, that will acknowledge sin, and seek remission, whilst it may be found! Let us be persuaded, therefore, and falling on our knees before the Lord, tell Him we are conscious of our guilt, and sorry for our sin. Sinners are encouraged to this act by the proclamation of God's forbearing compassions, and by the exhibition of a crucified Lord. Or, if sensible that the heart is cold and hard and dead, let this be a subject for lamentation *before God.* Where can mercy or relief be found but in Him alone? and who is there that can

shiver the rock, or melt the affections but only the Saviour? To Him, therefore, let the heart be presented, and let the cry arise, that He would be pleased to give forth the penitential and gracious influence. Let such, as have been privileged to know the grace, remember that it needs to be *cherished*, and that it will prove one of the christian's best possessions, if he retains penitence in *lively* exercise. For this end, such persons should be in the habit of closely investigating their ways and affections, so that the evil may not escape notice. And they should ever frequent the Saviour's cross by faith, striving to maintain a strong impression of the mystery of redemption, and an ardent gratitude for the blood shedding by which sin is expiated. True repentance is learnt at the cross: it *thrives* the best in that region: and he who lives nearest to Calvary, in a spirit of humble and believing reflection, will most abound in this unspeakable blessing. Daily and nightly, let the confession, the sorrow, the love of a penitent, be poured out before the Lord; and let grace be implored, that the genuine effects of contrition may be displayed in a life of holiness, and consecration to Him, by whom it has been redeemed and preserved.

Can we prove from the scriptures that true penitence is the gift of God?

"In meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." 2 Tim. ii. 25.

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel." Acts v. 31. See also John xvi. 8. Jer. xxxi. 19. Acts xi. 18.

Can we prove that a true penitent is filled with distress for sin, as hateful to God, and ruinous to the soul?

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee." Luke xv. 18.

"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Psalm li. 4.

"What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. See also Matt. xxvi. 75. Ez. xx. 43. Luke vii. 31. 38.

Is the penitent led to views of the crucified Redeemer?

"They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first born." Zech. xii. 10.

Will penitence lead unto self-abasement, confession, restitution, and newness of life?

"Behold I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once

have I spoken—but I will not answer—yea twice, but I will proceed no further." Job xl. 4, 5.

"I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin." Psalm xxxviii. 18. See also 2 Sam. xii. 13.

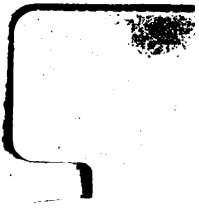
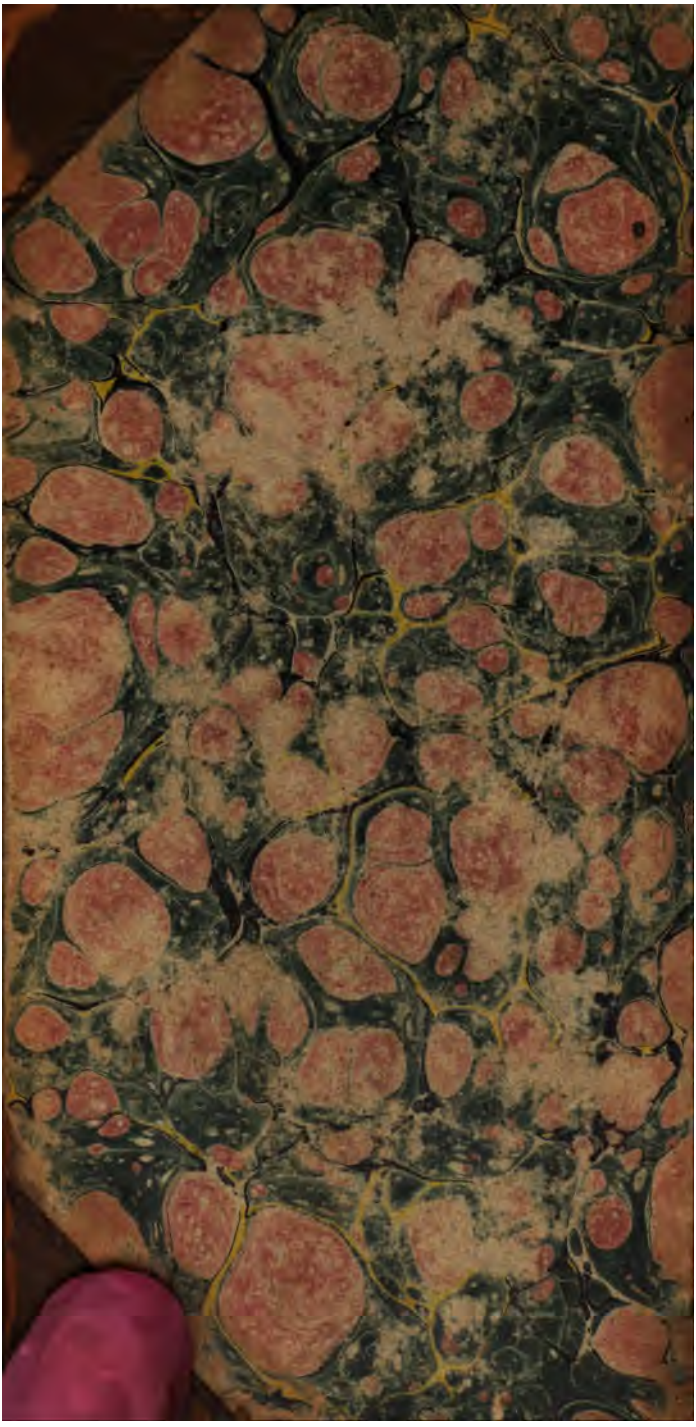
"Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Luke xix. 8.

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. Rom. vi. 18. See also Col. ii. 11—13. 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

Will God acknowledge penitence with correspondent mercy and peace?

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13.

"I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me for I have redeemed thee." Isa. xliv. 22.

"I have seen his ways, and will heal him, I will lead him also and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners." Isa. lvii. 18. See also Acts. ii. 37—40.

THE END.